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Contents

CHAP.	PAGE
I AT THE CONVENT GATE	7
II A MEMORABLE DAY	15
III THE MAN	21
IV JURA-THE-WISE	30
V THE WHITE WITCH SPEAKS'	35
VI° A RUNG IN THE LADDER OF LIFE . . .	47
VII THE INTERVIEW	53
VIII ARREST	58
IX THE QUESTION.	65
X ULUSIA AT THE EAGLES' TOWER . . .	69
XI THE STORM BREAKS.	78
XII THE CASTLE IS FIRED	89
XIII THE GALLERY OF CAVERNS	105
XIV THE GIRL MATHILDE	114
XV THE JOURNEY TO STREPITZA	119
XVI BETRAYAL	128
XVII ULUSIA HEARS OF THE ENGLISHMAN . .	137
XVIII NEWS FROM PAVNA	146
XIX THE SUMMONS	153

CHAP.	PAGE
XX A VOICE FROM THE HEIGHTS . . .	163
XXI THE BALL AT THE EMBASSY . . .	177
XXII INHERITANCE	186
XXIII THE CHURCH MILITANT	195
XXIV THERE IS NEWS FROM JAJCE . . .	201
XXV THE TOWN ABOVE THE CASCADE . .	207
XXVI THE MONK ARTHUR	214
XXVII PIETRO RITZI	224
XXVIII ULUSIA IS WARNED	233
XXIX THE EARL RESOLVES	241
XXX RUDOLPH OF TRIESTE VISITS THE PALACE	252
XXXI THE END OF THE DAY	264
XXXII HARRY VILLIERS CALLS UPON HIS FRIEND	273
XXXIII ULUSIA HEARS THE NEWS	277
XXXIV IN PRINCE KRESLIN'S GARDEN . .	285
XXXV ULUSIA DECIDES	291
XXXVI A CALL OF THE BLOOD	296
XXXVII RISEN FROM THE ASHES	301

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CHAPTER I

AT THE CONVENT GATE

MOTHER BARBARA kissed Ulusia upon both cheeks, and although in this she was not imitated by the Bishop, that worthy man smiled benign approval as he followed his niece to the convent gate.

Beyond, in the streets of Vienna, winter reigned ; not in the caparison of melancholy, but as a king of intimate delights.

It was the fourth day of January, and there had been unbroken frost since the beginning of the month of December. The streets were white and hard as iron. Icicles depended from the gargoyles of the convent church ; they ornamented even the scrubby beard of the ancient porter who ushered the Bishop to his carriage. Ulusia went out to a narrow thoroughfare where the sleigh bells tinkled merrily, and pedestrians trotted to keep themselves warm. Here everything spoke of the domination of winter and its picturesqueness.

"Good-bye, dear Mother," she said, turning for an instant to kiss her hand to the little old lady in the Benedictine robe ; "good-bye, dear Mother, I shall soon come back."

"Or we shall persuade Holy Mother to come to Rabka," said the Bishop, picking up his skirts lest the melted snow at the convent gates should soil them. So much anxiety did this manoeuvre cost him that he had forgotten all about Count Rudolph, whose nose was very red and hands were exceedingly blue with long waiting in the cold.

"My dear Ulusia, what am I thinking of—here is Count Rudolph."

Ulusia was just going to say, "Oh, is he?" but she checked herself in time, and gave the Count a pleasant nod. Then they all entered the carriage and were driven away rapidly to the station. Ulusia, radiantly young and properly happy, did not bless her uncle for that.

"Oh," she said, "if it were to Vienna we were going."

"But, my child, are you not going to Rabka, to your inheritance?"

She shook her head, looking ardently upon the splendid shops, the busy people, the trotting sleighs. Had she not spent the last fifteen years of her life in a convent—and she was but twenty-one?

"Dear uncle," she protested, "if you would but forget my inheritance a little while."

"Her Excellency prefers the bread to the salt," chimed in Count Rudolph, who had been ignored until this time. Ulusia heard him disdainfully. She forgot to remember that the Bishop had once called him handsome.

"Certainly I do," she exclaimed impatiently;

and then : " Oh, think of it, Count, fifteen years in a convent and then driven pell-mell from Vienna. Is that my inheritance ? "

His Saintliness smiled very sweetly.

" There is no compulsion, my child. From to-day you are your own mistress. Say the word and we will prepare a house in Vienna for you immediately."

She clapped her hands.

" Immediately . . . then, I have said it, uncle. Now, stop the sleigh."

" No need to do that," said Count Rudolph. . . .
" Here we are and here is the station."

Servants, awaiting them, now appeared from the narthex of the great terminus, and having saluted the good old Bishop, would have helped his niece to alight ; but Ulusia leaped to the pavement despite her heavy sables ; and turning one reluctant glance upon the city she was leaving, she consented to the journey.

Women are easily led when the cord is of gossamer. Ulusia was no exception—she was at liberty to return to Vienna ; therefore she did not.

" Well," she said, " it will only be one dreadful week more. Does the train start at once, uncle ? "

" At ten minutes past ten," rejoined the Bishop ; and having dropped his umbrella, he allowed his purse also to fall as a witness to his indifference.

They took their seats in a reserved first-class carriage and were soon on the way. Ulusia sat in the corner upon the right-hand side ; the Bishop

had his back to the engine, which he named facetiously "the Enemy"; Count Rudolph seated himself next to Ulusia and began to regard her with close attention. Ten years ago he made up his mind to marry her when she was twenty-one—but he had not seen her ten times in as many years.

Scrutiny pleased him. She was astonishingly fair, almost a Circassian in the milk-like softness of her skin and the abundance of prisoned hair, which a woman would have called "tow-coloured"—a man "golden." Her eyes he thought arbitrary and indicative of temper. After all, that was nothing, for he liked a woman with a temper. Her figure, just a little masculine, but well-developed and round in its prominent contours, pleased him. He reflected, none the less, that all this did not matter. Was she not the richest woman in Austria that day?

Ulusia caught him looking at her and had still sufficient of the schoolgirl to be tempted to respond with a grimace. She forbore with difficulty and began to question him in a way that was astonishing.

"Why did you come with my uncle?" she asked. He stroked his beard before replying.

"To pay my respects to the Mistress of Rabka."

"You've never paid them before . . . and I can't send you away for years, why did you come?"

The Count laughed as a man who has heard a very good joke. His face flushed crimson nevertheless.

"Mother Barbara is not a friend to soldiers."

"Did she refuse you permission to see me?"

"I am not saying that——"

"Then do not say anything at all. How far is it from Vienna to my house?"

"It is just two hundred and seventy-six miles, Countess."

He had not called her Countess before, and as she had been simply "Ulusia" to every one in the convent, the title amused her. They laughed together; but as though resenting his familiarity she became serious instantly.

"And my salt mines . . . how far are they from the Castle?"

He did not like the possessive expression; it jarred upon his sense of authority: but he answered with what nonchalance he could—

"They are everywhere, at your door, beneath your kitchens, under the very walls which Count Stephen built five hundred years ago. You can pass straight from the hall of your house to the workings. That's a door I don't suppose you will often use!"

She lifted her head and showed him antagonistic eyes.

"Why should I not use it? Am I forbidden?"

"Oh, by no means . . . but, well, the mipes of Rabka are not as pretty as Vienna."

She was silent a little while, watching the frozen Danube by which the train carried them. They had come to the low mountains which girdle the great Viennese plain, and were following the river

valley with these whitened domes as their sentinels. All the countryside sparkled in the bright sunshine. They could see sleighs upon the highroad and their occupants, clad in heavy furs, looked like so many bears from the hills tucked away beneath hairy rugs and vastly amused by their adventure.

"You think I am very much out of place at Rabka," said Ulusia presently. He did not deny it.

"I think you should see the mine and then forget that it is yours. It needs a man's hand, Countess. We have to be very firm. These 'labour movements' burrow underground—even I have my difficulties."

She nodded her head.

"They say that you are very cruel to the men."

He lifted his eyebrows—glancing towards the figure of the Bishop in the corner. A premature alarm—the good man already slumbered peacefully.

"Who are my detractors?"

"Every one who knows Rabka. They say that dreadful things are done in the mine. I am going to see for myself."

"I will conduct you everywhere. Your own eyes shall acquit me. What I have done has been in your interests—there would have been no mine at Rabka if it had been done otherwise."

Ulusia laughed.

"I knew that you would say that," she said a little scornfully—and then: "Are you not hungry, Count Rudolph? I am. I perish with hunger . . .

and look at my uncle. How can he sleep at this time of day? Isn't it disgraceful?"

His Saintliness awoke at this moment to ask, "What was disgraceful?" and obtaining no satisfactory reply consented to stoop to the mere earthly necessities of bread and meat—to say nothing of the excellent golden wine which the Count commanded. They breakfasted while the train rolled on amid ice-bound mountains, across the frozen face of giant rivers; and when they had breakfasted, even Ulusia imitated the Bishop, her uncle, and deigned to sleep. It was half-past three when she awoke to perceive Count Rudolph watching her closely, and to realize that they had entered upon a wilder country, stern, desolate and even forbidding.

"Well," she exclaimed, "and are we there?"

"You are just thirty miles from 'there.'"

"Oh," she exclaimed, "what a dreadful journey."

"I shall never come back when I escape."

The Count sighed upon a sense of real relief.

"You will be very wise not to do so."

"Wise to run away from my own property?"

"Wise to enjoy the fruits of it."

"I am very rich, Count Rudolph."

He smiled.

"You will never know how rich you are."

"Then I shall take a house in Vienna and enjoy myself——"

"It would have to be a fine house——"

"Oh, of course, and I shall fill it with all my old

friends from the convent—and be 'not at home' to my uncle," she added with a mischievous glance toward him. The Count approved the idea.

"But you will be 'at home' to me," he said, with all the unction he could command.

"I shall be at home to you if they speak well of you at the mines——"

"If they speak well! Who may 'they' be?"

"The workmen . . . the people you have ruled in my name."

"Oh, they will give me a poor character, no doubt."

"Then you will deserve it."

Her candour astonished him. Secretly, he resolved that the taming of this little "tiger cat" should be one of his ambitions; but he made a commonplace answer, and thereafter spoke of commonplace things. Meanwhile, the railway debouched suddenly upon a drear plain from one side of which the mountains appeared to have vanished altogether. A number of high chimneys, ugly and monstrous, took shape upon a distant horizon. Darkness fell quickly, and soon it was night.

Count Rudolph touched his Saintliness upon the shoulder, and helped Ulusia to put on her furs.

"This is Rabka," he said, "this is your home."

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CHAPTER II

A MEMORABLE DAY

ULUSIA dreamed of many things that night ; her visions being chiefly of a carriage drawn by four, brown horses, and a mob of dark-visaged people, who lifted torches as she passed and cried the name of her dead uncle, Philip the Wise.

This was quite a triumphant entry to Rabka. They passed beneath many arches of lanterns from a primitive railway station to the foot of the mountains. Thence upwards upon a zigzag to the ramparts of the Castle.

Ulusia had been as delighted as a child with all this fiery panoply of welcome. She liked to see the rockets cleaving the black darkness, to hear the people's shout of welcome and to realize that she, who yesterday was a schoolgirl, had become to-day the mistress of this half-seen community. When the guns thundered upon the hillside, she shrank from their report but would not have stilled it. Had not Count Rudolph said that Rabka was no place for a woman ?

They had crossed a drawbridge at length and passed into a gloomy stone courtyard, beyond which lay the great doors of the Castle. Footmen in

liveries of gold and blue stood here, and an ancient Major Domo with a profound contempt for all women. When he had bowed very stiffly to Ulusia he gave place to a little old lady in black, the Baroness Elwitza—the chaperone whom the Bishop had chosen to satisfy the world if not his niece. Ulusia nodded to her and went upstairs to dress for a formal dinner in an old stone dining-room, of which the only pleasant ornament was a vast fire of logs roaring up an ancient chimney.

Count Rudolph did not appear at the dinner table, pleading arrears of work. As for his Saintliness, fatigue had him in her grip; and it was left for the little nut-faced Baroness to speak enthusiastically of Rabka and its wonders. When she found that no one listened to her, she also lapsed into that melancholy silence which desires bed and is not to be denied.

They were all fast asleep by ten o'clock, and Ulusia was dreaming of the carriage with four horses and the laughing postilions. She seemed still to hear the booming of the guns and the ringing of bells: nor was this wholly a delusion, for the Castle clock waked her at six o'clock precisely, and immediately afterwards she heard the call of the Angelus.

What a change was this from yesternight! What a scene of rugged grandeur upon the one hand and of human activity upon the other. Far above the Castle heights stood the whitened crags of the mountains, dominating hill and valley, torrent and cascade. Northward, however, it was impos-

sible to count the trucks laden with the fresh ground salt or all the busy men who despatched them upon their journeys to Vienna and the West. Here lay the mine of Rabka . . . here far below the earth men delved night and day that Ulusia might be the richest woman in Austria.

She was but a child this morning, wearing her convent dress of dark blue cloth with lace at the wrists of it, and hardly looking twice in the glass before she ran downstairs to burst out upon the terrace and enjoy the freshness of the morning air. Passing from this to other terraces, down step by step, to the great plain, spread out as a snow sea before the Castle walls, at length she met Count Rudolph and heard, but would not hear, the curse with which he had greeted sub-inspector Kessling who had just told him a truth he did not wish to learn. The Count turned as red as a turkey-cock to be thus overheard, but he was at no pains to excuse himself—

“I am shutting the cafés below at six o’clock to-day,” he said, “there is too much drunkenness on these occasions—I mean to stop it.”

Ulusia did not understand him at all.

“Cafés—are there cafés below the ground?”

“My dear young lady . . . there are scores of them.”

“And the people?”

“Some of them never see the sun.”

“Oh,” she cried, “what a life to live! Can we not alter that, Count Rudolph?”

He laughed with just a soupçon of irony.

"Interfere with them and they will murder you. I know them. A philanthropist's life would not be worth twenty hours' purchase at Rabka. Whatever you do . . . in two years' time, Countess—avoid philanthropy. They are too well off already."

She would not argue with him.

"I will ask them if that is true," she said quietly—and then; "Of course you know best, Count—you have been so long among them."

"As your servant, Countess . . . that and nothing more. All that I do is in your name. It will be done with greater zeal now that I know you."

Here was Count Rudolph's first attempt to modulate his voice and sentiment to the rôle upon which he had been so long intent. This mere child, he thought, could hardly escape him. Would not he be her companion day by day at Rabka; and while he talked so glibly about her return to Vienna, was not that the very last journey he desired? Unfortunately, he might as well have addressed the wall of the Castle as Ulusia von Erlach, its mistress. She paid not the slightest attention to him, but gathering her skirts and showing him the shapeliest ankle in Rabka that day, she prepared to return to breakfast.

"At what time does the service begin, Count Rudolph?"

"At ten o'clock—in the cathedral, Countess."

The cathedral! Oh, surely these were fables. A cathedral below the ground! People who never

saw the sun !. This was her heritage. * She, Ulusia, the schoolgirl, was the mistress of the wonders. Oh she must hasten to see them.

Bishop Heinrich von Erlach, for that was her uncle's name, had not appeared when Ulusia re-entered the Castle, and she imagined that she would not see him until after the service. Baroness Elwitza—who had been baptized Louise—took coffee with her charge—for as such she would consider Ulusia—and spoke of the necessity of an imposing entrée.

" You have been a name to these people since your dear father died," she said, " do not disappoint them to-day. I think it very necessary that you should be well dressed, my child. I would prefer to see you magnificent, if I may use the word."

" Use any word you please, madame," said Ulusia curtly, " I am going as I am."

" But, dear girl, your convent dress——"

Ulusia laughed.

" I know enough about the mines for that, Baroness—they dress you in canvas and you wear nails in your boots. Why talk of magnificence ? Shall I write it upon my back : ' She is dressed in a coat of leather, but she is magnificent ? ' No, no, I will go to the people as I am—to my people, Baroness. If they will not love me so, they shall not love me at all."

The Baroness was much perturbed to hear that her beautiful gown from *Leblanc et ses fils* of 11, Peters-Platz, Vienna, was forbidden to make an

impression upon the miners of Rabka, to say nothing of their wives ; but she spoke no more of a " magnificent " appearance ; and when the time came for them to go down to the cathedral she appeared in a simple black dress with a beaded bonnet, and expressed anxiety for the salvation even of those.

This was far from a dramatic entry, for the religious rite forbade any such thing and the honours of vesture were momentarily with the Bishop. None the less it was a memorable day and Ulusia never forgot it to her life's end.

CHAPTER III

THE MAN

COUNT RUDOLPH himself came to conduct Ulusia to the mines, and with him were three of the Chiefs of the Rabka police, not unpicturesquely dressed in a neat uniform of brown waterproof cloth with heavy brass helmets for their chief ornament. These saluted in the military fashion, while a little company of serving men presently joined them and notified that all was ready.

This company gathered in the great stone hall of the Castle and waited there a little while for my Lord Bishop, who appeared presently in his violet robes, but not yet habited for the office. To the Baroness' whispered question concerning the canvas overalls and the hob-nailed boots, he answered that they were not necessary for the cathedral, which lay on the upper of the five storeys, and was but a few hundred feet below the ground. This put the little old lady to much chagrin, and she was still lamenting her beaded bonnet when the Major Domo with a majestic bow opened the great doors upon the left-hand side of the hall and they began their descent.

Let us follow them observantly to this wonderful world below the earth.

For the moment, it is true, they were confronted by nothing more remarkable than a wide marble staircase, lit everywhere by electric lamps and guarded by Rabka police as though it were a fortress. Anon, however, the giant lift was reached and here, in a cage gorgeous in silk and velvets, the simple journey began. Living and breathing at one moment in a known and familiar kingdom, the next appeared to carry them to the domains of fairyland, to the place of fables, and the heart of mysteries.

As in a flash from the glory of the day to the regions of eternal night—from the realities of the sunshine to the magic of dreamland—whirled down from a bleak country to a city and a people that hardly knew the sun. Such was the transit which Ulusia made. Such was her introduction to the mines of Rabka.

She had been unprepared : how could it be otherwise ? They had told her what Rabka was like, had tried to fire her imagination by pictures of its wonderland—but what child could conceive the magnitude of these things or all their bewildering novelty ?

Now Ulusia stepped from the Castle lift into the Imperial Avenue of the Rabka mine, and what she saw was a vast boulevard of pure rock-salt ; a boulevard roofed by salt, with salt for its pavements, salt for its roadway, salt for the very walls of the gorgeous houses and shops which bordered its avenues. Carrying the scheme to its logical conclusion, there were even kiosks of the eternal rock and spreading fountains whose basins a sculptor's hand had curved.

Illumined by thousands of giant arc-lamps, the splendour of this scene was beyond anything that Ulusia had conceived possible, beyond all the dreams of a pictured and a fabled land. So she stood a little while entranced, listening to the cheers from a thousand throats and wholly unconscious that she was the object of them.

How the people welcomed her ! True, there was a more turbulent element at the back which cried its welcome a little savagely, but this had no taste to try the temper of the horsemen's sabres ; while those in the front rank, amazed that such a mere child and one so beautiful should be the Lady Ulusia could not shout loud enough to establish their satisfaction. And down their ranks, the famous police of Rabka mounted and with swords drawn protecting her, Ulusia passed in Bishop Heinrich's company to the cathedral gates and the Mass of Thanksgiving.

Consider this splendid fane—a Byzantine cathedral cut sheer from the rock : its roof lying beneath the ground ; altar, stalls, pulpit, all shining with a silvery lustre or the hues of jasper and of porphyry beneath the magic of the lamps. Here lay a building wherein ten thousand might stand and nigh four thousand might sit. Here the miners of Rabka came, their wives, their sisters, their children to give thanks as the Bishop hoped—but, in truth, to see the Lady Ulusia who would bestow freedom upon them.

It was a stately pageant, helped not a little by

the singers from Vienna and an orchestra of clever instrumentalists trained in the shadow of the mines. As for the curious throngs which knelt in the nave, all nations of the Near East appeared to be represented there. And all wore their native dress to-day, so that Ulusia, looking down from her high seat near the pulpit, was dazzled by a swaying sea of colour which shimmered in the warm glow of lamps as a field of corn in the glamour of the moonlight. In turn these thousand faces were watching her, keenly and with close scrutiny. Would she help them? Would she be their friend? Ah, how much her friendship might mean!

Ulusia, however, remained quite unconscious of all this. If the plain truth is to be told, she cared little at such a time for mere religious display, little for the solemn music, the muted harmonies, the strident voice of Bishop Heinrich as he stood at the altar and prayed for the people who supplied him with so many comforts. Indeed, she was thankful when the service was over and they went to the "public breakfast" in the Hall of Crystals, as the banqueting hall is named at Rabka.

Here strutting worthies in wonderful uniforms pledged each other in brief toasts and declared mutually that they were the finest fellows in the world. The Bishop made a speech which no one quite understood and drank champagne in episcopal moderation. It remained for Count Rudolph to propose Ulusia's health—which he did with redundant compliment and as subtle flattery which was

irresistible. Then he drained a glass to her and every man sprang to his chair and lifting glasses, or breaking them as the national custom went, cried for long minutes together "Hoch, hoch, hoch."

Ulusia had never made a speech in all her life and she had a very poor notion of what she ought to say to this company. Her words were very simple and natural. She wished the people's happiness but felt herself quite unable to promote it. For that she relied upon her good friend Count Rudolph—an expression which provoked others, who were acquainted with the Count's brutalities, to smiles. Her reference to her own childhood was amusing. "If I do wrong you must blame my uncle," she said naively, "for he has been responsible for my education." And then she added quite naturally—"but I expect you all to teach me to do right."

They cheered this and liked the tone of it. The younger men declared her to be very pretty—but with "a devil of a will of her own." Older heads surmised that Rudolph would quickly tame her and promised themselves some excitement from such a contention of wills during the months to come. This promise, indeed, was the chief subject of talk while the banquet endured—and when it was done many of the officers declared their intention of following "Her Excellency" to the depths and hearing her opinion of them. Were there not black secrets down there and would this little schoolgirl dream of them?

They put on their overalls in the great room

known as the "Stranger's Hall" and began without any further delay the tour of the mines of Rabka proper. It is true that there were arcades and streets on the floors immediately below the great cathedral—but these were not so fine as the Imperial arcade—and lower down still, a gigantic lift dropping them swiftly in an iron cage, they came to the actual workings, where the rock salt was cut from the solid walls and sent up the tremendous shafts to the grinding mills above.

Here for the first time a true sense of this subterranean world impressed the beholder and could but inspire him to awe. Acheron itself flowed through these depths, a black river in a bed of jade—for such it seemed to be. And upon both sides of it were the wide tunnels through which horses, that knew no other world, dragged their burdens toward the day.

It should be admitted that Ulusia carried but vague impressions of this wonder-world—nor could it have been otherwise upon a first visit to Rabka. Was not this a country of its own? And how different from the fabled lands of her imagination. These cafés wherein the leather-coated workmen had begun already to keep carnival, how different from those she had seen in the Prater at Vienna upon the rare days of an excursion abroad! These tunnelled streets, what journeys they suggested, into the very bowels of the earth, to the nameless darkness and the abode of spirits! And the people, red-eyed and pale and slipping as though a ray from

the world above may fall upon them by accident and strike them with blindness! Ulusia shrank from these people, for Rabka had put its spell upon her and she began almost to fear that she would never see the living world again.

Count Rudolph, be it observed, did not remain unconscious of this impression, nor was he dissatisfied with it. Whatever the enthusiasm at Rabka, he wanted no woman in the mines. Let Ulusia play with a girl's toys in the house and park above—that was her sphere; but the labyrinth, its governance, its secrets, surely they were his!

Persuasively he pointed out the dangers of the way—the inconvenience of it; he spoke of “irreconcilables” who roamed the lower workings as criminals the alleys of a great city. He told of dark crimes committed there; of dreadful women of whom the very police were afraid; of riot and even murder. To all of which Ulusia replied in a tone which he found difficult to interpret. Perhaps her shrewd wit already perceived his drift.

“Afraid,” she exclaimed, “all these fine fellows with the big sabres, did you say they were afraid of the women?”

“In a sense, yes. A clever man is always afraid of an angry woman.”

“Then I must not be angry—or you would be afraid of me. Where are these dreadful people?”

“Some are in the black gallery—many live by the lake-side.”

“The lake—is there a lake at Rabka?”

"The most wonderful lake in the world."

"Then why do you not take me to see it?"

"I waited for His Excellency——"

"My uncle—oh, I never wait for him. Please take me to the lake at once—if you are not afraid."

He made no further objection, but summoning a young officer to his side, he whispered a command and immediately led the way down a wide tunnel of the rock to a narrow winding staircase which police guarded with drawn sabres in their hands. Down this they passed, treading a laborious way to a wider gallery below and thence through a series of giant caves; where torch-bearers awaited them, to the subterranean river and lake of Rabka. Nor did the Count pause until he stood upon the brink of that black and silent sea, which assuredly is one of the wonders of the world.

"Here, Countess, is the lake of Rabka. I think you will not wish to go farther to-day."

She did not answer him. The magic of the place was beyond all words. And the silence of that windless, waveless water—the silence and the mystery!

Extending, it may be, a full mile from the place where they stood, this black pool would have been but as a lake of ebony save for the torches which flashed gold upon its unruffled surface from many a passing boat or jettisoned their beams to discover a thousand marvels of the crystal rock.

Dark hulls sped by constantly, the hulls of the ships of mystery, ferried by no son of Erebus. From time to time a cry came across the water and was

answered back in tones of savage assent or merry mockery. The rocks themselves could show you the shadowy figures of men and women creeping in and out of the crevices as rabbits from a warren. There were even children playing upon the summits of the precipices, whence the touch of a hand would have sent them headlong to the water below. These were the concern of none. Had not their young eyes gazed too often upon the floating dead who were Rabka's tribute to her criminals? Let the lesson be learned that the fittest of them should live even as the animals.

The Count had sent the younger officer for a boat and this now appeared at the water's edge—a sorry gilded barge, wherein Philip the Wise, Ulusia's famous ancestor, had been wont to visit the lake, in the days of the golden age. Herein, with the little nut-faced Baroness, whose awe was too deep for words, with Rudolph and ten oarsmen, Ulusia set out to see the lake. A police boat followed them and another crazy craft full of musicians who played ancient instruments discordantly. They passed from point to point, here discovering the wonders of new caves; there of the cascades which gushed in silver splendour from the black and forbidding rocks. And so, at last, they came to the island and there they saw the man.

CHAPTER IV

JURA THE WISE

SOME rockets had been discharged to illuminate the natural roof, itself one of the marvels of Rabka ; and as these were fired the island and its master were disclosed.

Ulusia perceived a little round house carved from a giant pillar of the rock, and before this a terrace sloping to the water's edge, and upon the terrace a man of immense stature. Wearing breeches of dark blue cloth and a fine shirt above it, his legs were bare to the knees, his feet shod with rugged sandals. In his hand he carried a heavy staff or club and his long unkempt hair was imprisoned by a round Greek cap in whose folds a number of small diamonds gleamed.

To Ulusia's immediate question, " Who is that man ? " Count Rudolph answered as readily : " He is the master of the boats, Jura, a ne'er-do-well." And then he added, " I do not think you need trouble about him, Countess."

Ulusia thought upon it for an instant and then she asked—

" Is not he the rebel of whom my uncle has spoken ? Do you not call him Jura the Wise ? "

"It is so. There are always people ready to ascribe wisdom to discontent."

"Being themselves discontented. Please let me see this rebel for myself, Count. I wish to speak to him."

He laughed, but gave the necessary command.

"He will be greatly flattered—his boast is silence."

"Then I am sure that he is a wise man."

They approached the rocks upon the words and some of the torchbearers raised their flares aloft that the figure of the man might be perceived more clearly. This near inspection did not belie the strength and dignity which distance had suggested. The fellow must have been at least six feet three in height, his limbs were enormous, his face that of a Greek who had won strength in northern climes. He looked down upon them majestically but did not utter a single word.

"They call you Jura the Wise," said Ulusia, as the boat came grinding along the terrace before his house. He bent his head in assent.

"Is it true that you have never left the mine?"

"It is true."

"And that you have lived all your life upon this island?"

"In so far as any man lives at Rabka, that is true also."

"But you have your freedom, your liberty . . . why do you use it in this way?"

"That the day may come when it may serve me more profitably."

"Is it for that reason they call you a wise man?"

"I do not ask their reasons."

"You know my name; you know that I am the Countess von Erlach?"

"I would name you among ten thousand—you are Ulusia, the daughter of Feodor. Had you been his brother Philip's child, your welcome would be surer."

"Then the people think of me as Count Feodor's daughter?"

"If they think of you at all."

The candour of it piqued her. She would never forget that scene—the torches, the boats, the black gold water, the heroic figure of the man. When he answered her imperiously, her pride suffered but her reason justified him. Count Rudolph himself did not dare to speak the word which would terminate the interview.

"What message has Jura the Wise for his mistress?"

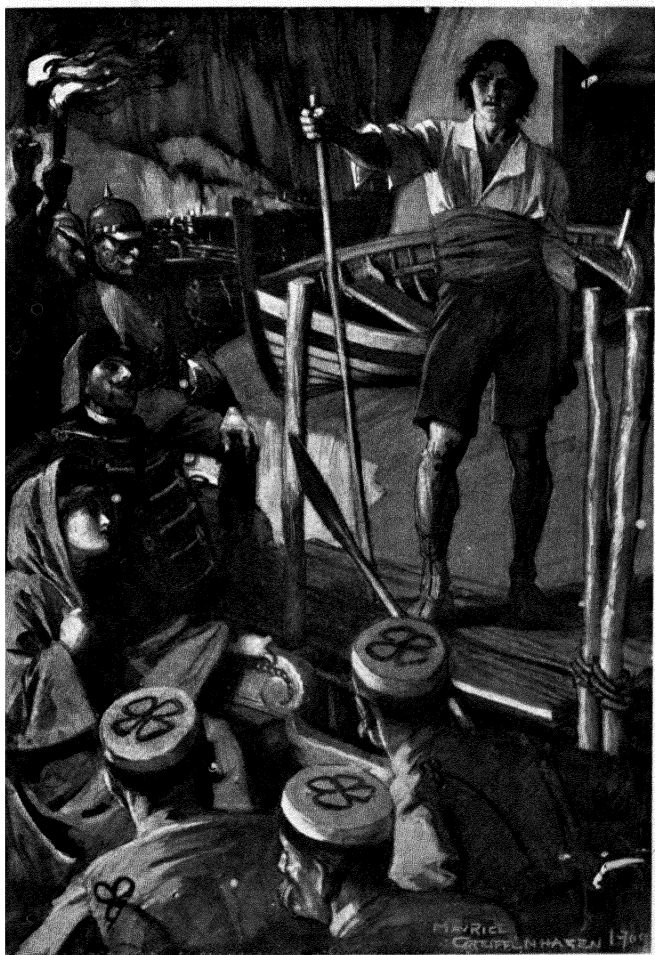
"He knows neither mistress nor master. Do you beware of both——"

"But if my answer were as yours! I know neither mistress nor master——"

"It would not be true. Riches will be your mistress and self-confidence your master. Beware of them."

"Then you have no other word of wisdom for me, Herr Jura?"

"Those who cannot command should never advise a woman. Some day I will speak with you."



"What message has Jura the Wise for his mistress?"
[White Walls]

[Page 32.]

"But not now?"

"Not at your request. It is impossible."

He turned brusquely upon his heel and walked away toward the hut. A loud shout of protest upon his rudeness, uttered by Count Rudolph, remained unanswered. This man feared no one—to Ulusia, whose quick eyes read every story at a glance, it was equally clear that others feared him and none so patently as the Count Rudolph of Trieste.

"Who is the man?" she asked, as the boat was thrust off and turned. The Count could not tell her that.

"Some say that he is the son of Anna, whom the women call the White Witch. It is not known for certain."

"He is privileged then to speak as he pleases?"

"In a sense, yes. The men trust his wisdom, the women worship him. He is very useful to us. A hundred of our police could not do the work that he does here."

"Is that why you permit him to tell me that I must beware of you?"

"Of me, Countess?"

"Certainly, he said I was to beware of my master—you heard him, Baroness."

The little Baroness, yellow-faced and shrunkened, had not opened her lips since they embarked upon the voyage. She awoke now as from a stupor.

"What were you saying my child?"

"That I am to beware of my master and my

"What nonsense . . . these workpeople are growing very insolent. You must not listen to them, Ulusia."

"I am sure you thought him a very handsome man, Baroness. Do you deny it?"

"I, my child! Why, it is ten years since I asked myself whether any man was handsome or ugly. He seemed a very fine fellow though—too fine to be in this dreadful place."

"Dreadful, Baroness—do you think it that?"

"I think we have come to the place the good Bishop spoke of in his sermons. I am sure there are evil spirits here."

"Nothing worse than prune-brandy," said the Count affably, and then: "Take courage, dear lady, we are about to leave it."

The boat now approached the mainland, and all prepared to go ashore. The lake behind them was almost in darkness by this time; but the man had come from his hut again and stood, a torch in his hand, at the water's edge. No figure could have matched that glowing scene so perfectly. He seemed to be a King of the Nether World about to summon the Furies from the shadows. The island behind him might well have been his throne.

And such Ulusia could well imagine it to be as she stepped from the boat and followed the Count to the foot of the winding staircase.

CHAPTER V

THE WHITE WITCH SPEAKS

IT was said at Rabka that none but the old woman Anna and the girl Mathilde had entered the hut of Jura the Wise since the day he took possession of it—fifteen years before Ulusia left her convent at Vienna.

. Naturally the life of such a man gained much by its mysteries. The ignorant miners would tell you that he had the gift of second sight and of magic. His mean hut was supposed by them to be adorned with vessels of silver and of gold and to harbour the *elixir vitæ*.

In truth it contained little beyond some fine bearskins, a truckle bed, a portrait of the Great Count Philip the Wise, and some volumes of the world's masterpieces. These Jura had read, seeking to know what lay beyond the confines of his kingdom and what were those glories of the day of which the fables spoke.

Dimly, as in a clouded mirror, scenes of infancy would be shown to him, sometimes in his sleep; more rarely in his waking moods. By the books and the words which the Monk Arthur had spoken, he would have painted these more surely.

Folk said of him that he was a learned man, and

in so far as man, who is shut from God's day and the life of the known world can be learned, that was true.

The Monk Arthur, that devoted priest who spent forty years of his life below the ground with the miners of Rabka, had seen to this before they banished him. He had made a companion, a friend of Jura the Wise. He taught him to read in the books. He had said, "there is no life but that of the spirit." From him came the doctrine that woman is abhorrent and by her comes man's damnation.

In the bowels of the mines such a lesson may have been necessary. Jura knew something of the nameless infamies of the labyrinths; of the scenes that befel when Carnival was kept; of the haggard pitiful wretches who crept out of the darkness when the hour of madness had come.

And more than all this was the lesson of the mission.

"You are to be the king of this place," the monk had said. Jura believed it to be his destiny.

Knowledge in his case was a real measure of power. He knew the men and they chose him for their leader, the man who had never seen the sun, who would not go to the cities with them, who abhorred women.

And now a woman had come to reign at Rabka, and already, in the brief space of ten days, Rabka was in revolt. It spoke openly of rebellion, of mutiny, of death. Who was Feodor's daughter

to dominate the inheritance the great Philip had left? By what right did she curtail their ancient privileges? Was not their lot hard enough already that she should impose these new burdens upon them? Why should they suffer her?

How were such as these to know that the burdens they spoke of were not imposed by Ulusia at all, but were the first of many subtle efforts to displace her, made by that shrewd schemer, Count Rudolph of Trieste. Putting it abroad cleverly that he was but the servant of the new mistress, he published his edicts one by one and answered all complaints with a shrug. Henceforth they were to be ruled by a woman. Let the wise men among them remember that when they complained.

Jura, living his solitary life upon the island, heard these tales from many lips and was not deceived by them. He did not believe that the new policy was that of a mere schoolgirl just come out of a convent, and he did not hesitate to say so whenever opportunity offered. Going but rarely to the cafés and the clubs, he had no idea of the spirit of rebellion which was abroad. Nor was he able to estimate it properly until the tenth day after Ulusia's visit, when the "Wise Men" or "People's Parliament" sent a deputation to him and begged him to speak for them. This was followed across the water by many of the more turbulent spirits, who seized upon the boats contrary to all the law of Rabka, and hardly permitted the saner voices to be heard for the clamour,

Now this was a memorable day. The swarthy miners, clad in their canvas and leather suits, and accompanied by scores of shrieking women, who believed that the new mistress of Rabka would be their undoing, came shouting across the lake to Jura's door and were not to be silenced for a long while, even by that masterful personality. When, at length, they perceived the folly of this and that the one in whom their greatest hope of succour lay was about to turn his back upon them, they consented to let the deputation speak, punctuating every sentence with a howl of rage and swearing the "black death" against their oppressors.

"There are to be police at the Parliament, Jura; the woman has decreed it."

"The schools are to be shut; the children are to go above, Jura, they are to be taken from us."

"They talk about inspecting our houses. . . . There's a fine thing for you; they want to peep into our cupboards and see what we keep there."

"The sick are to go to the town: God help those who ail if the woman gets her way with them."

"Help us, Jura, she will listen to you."

He heard them patiently, and when a savage woman, leaping to the bank by his side, brandished a knife and cried—"Ay, here's what she'll listen to"—a look and a gesture sent her cowering to the boat again. You could hear the very ebbing of the water upon the island "hard" when Jura spoke to them.

"My friends," he said, "first be sure that the evil you imagine is not your good. I have seen this woman and my judgment credits her with none of these things. She is still a child and by what miracle has she inherited the wisdom which sends the sick where they will be cared for and the children where they will get knowledge? So, I say, seek out her advisers first and charge them—but not to your disadvantage. There are some things which should have been done a long while ago at Rabka and will be no worse for a woman's doing. These will find us not without gratitude—but for the other matters you mention, and chiefly concerning the police, you know well what answer we shall make."

"You will make it in our name, Jura?"

"That I do not promise—are there not leaders among you?"

"We have no leader like Jura the Wise. Will you not go to her?"

They took it up in a resounding cry which rang in a thousand echoes beneath that mighty vaulted roof, and was heard afar even in the remoter caves where the dark secrets lay. Would he not help them? Would he not go to the woman? To all of which he could but repeat the question: "Had they not other leaders?" and was still wrestling with them when the police appeared upon the far shore and, drawing their sabres, began to beat the people back. Soon they were in possession of some of the boats and, threatening to fire upon the mob

if it did not instantly disperse, they drove the rioters headlong.

• Jura, the torch still in his hand, watched the scene from the door of his house, and began to perceive with what reason his fellows had appealed to him.

It had been no offence in the old time to come to Jura the Wise for counsel, nor had the authorities interfered with such meetings of the workmen as were held on the lake-side to discuss the common weal. To-day a new spirit prevailed. He saw men struck down with the flat of sabres, women hustled brutally and even the children maltreated. And in response he heard the people cry : " Kill her —kill the woman." Surely Rabka had changed much in the brief days since Feodor's daughter came from Vienna to remind them that the son of Philip was dead.

He was alone by this time, the water had been cleared of the boats and the miners driven back to the workings. True, there were voices to be heard from time to time, and these would come from the crags of the rocks, where many a fugitive sheltered, or from the mouths of dark tunnels of which even the police were afraid.

For the rest, this dark world might have been unpeopled ; and when Jura had regarded it sadly a little while he extinguished his torch, and, entering a boat, he cast it off and rowed away rapidly toward the eastern galleries where all was desolation and silence.

The lake runs east and west at Rabka, and it is at the western end—just as in the great towns of the upper world—that the riches and splendour of the mines are to be found.

Eastward there are the disused workings, forgotten halls of a dead magnificence, and the black river itself flowing in a vast chasm whose walls glitter with a thousand facets of the crystal rock, and whose roof is one of the wonders of the world.

Through this fearful gorge, driving his boat with powerful oars, Jura now sped upon his self-imposed mission. No stories of the place affrighted, nor did its difficulties delay him. A pilot upon a river abandoned by all, nay, dreaded as the very abode of the ultimate terrors, he needed no lantern to guide him, recalled no fable to abate his courage. Cascades rippling the placid waters were but a play of foam upon his heated face. The gaping mouths of tunnels and galleries suggested no monstrous creatures, but rather a security of retreat where none should follow him. By these he sped until a good mile lay between him and the island of the lake ; then driving his boat to the bank he secured it to a crag of the rock and sprang nimbly ashore.

It was black dark here—the faint rays of light which illumined the river lower down were lost in the contractions of the chasm. But Jura had a lantern to his hand, and when he had lighted it he climbed the steep a little way ; and, entering a narrow tunnel, he followed it perhaps two hundred yards until it opened out into a spacious apartment, itself

giving way to a still larger room where there were many signs, not only of inhabitation but even of luxury beyond all expectation.

Rugs of bearskin covered the floors of this rocky cave ; there were lamps of an Oriental fashion depending from its lofty roof, and shedding a subdued glow upon many a quaintly-fashioned chair or bureau, and even upon pictures of some merit which decorated its walls. An open grate set cunningly in a crevice permitted a cheery fire, and showed a savoury stew the unknown cook was preparing. The bed itself had a great black crucifix above, with a figure of the Christ in pure gold. A table of Spanish mahogany was laid for two persons, and the glass and silver upon it would have done no discredit to the castle of the Lady Ulusia herself. Jura cast one glance upon this table, and then, drawing a chair a little way back from the fire, he sat and waited patiently, listening to the ticking of an old clock and anon to its chime. Time had so little to do with such as he.

"Is it you, my son ? "

"It is I, little mother."

"I said that you would come to-day—I have prepared for you."

"Why did you say it of this day, little mother ? "

"The hour is at hand. What should keep you ? Come, my son, we will eat and drink, and then you shall tell me."

A little old woman, white skinned and with hardly

a wrinkle upon her chubby face had entered as he sat ; but so silently that even his quick ear did not detect her footstep. An observer would have noticed that her hands were stony white, while her hair was the very colour of the white walls which sheltered her. He would have admitted also that her eyes were merrily blue, and her movements surprisingly agile for so old a creature. This woman the people named Anna, the White Witch. They believed that she ruled the eastward galleries, and called evil spirits and fearsome creatures of the rocks to her aid. The very superstition was her security. Not for a thousand golden crowns would a miner have dared this sanctum. She was safer in her cave than any noble in his castle.

"So you expected me to-day, little mother?"

"I have told you so, my son."

"What do you mean by saying that the hour has come?"

She filled him a glass of the golden wine, and heaped meat upon his plate. The love of a mother for a son was evident in all her acts.

He, the Wise Man Jura, was the mainspring of her life. She had lived the patient years because of him.

"I mean, my son, that the time has come when these gates will be open to you. Twenty years and more you have obeyed me. The hour is at hand when I shall ask obedience no more."

Jura lifted his glass, but he could not hide from her the deep flush of colour which suffused his pale

cheeks, nor the trembling hand which betrayed his agitation.

"Would you give me the day, little mother?"

"As you say—the day, my son."

"I am to go out to the world, to the land of the dreams, to the cities of which the monk spoke, to the earth upon which the sun shines—will my eyes bear to look upon such sights, little mother?"

"They will bear it, my son—for a woman's hand will lead you."

"Your hand then——"

"Nay, another's hand, my son—as it was appointed. Have I not promised you this from the beginning?"

"You have promised me liberty and the dominion over men. The monk spoke of sacrifice and the world beyond. I hear two voices, but cannot choose between them, little mother."

"You will choose to-day. Have you forgotten what the people said? I was upon the lake when they came to you. They said: 'Kill her—kill the woman and the stranger.' Were you deaf to that, Jura, son?"

He thought upon it a little while, watching her face curiously.

"Count Rudolph is very clever," he said at last, "he would embitter the people against her. Many of the things he would do are wise, but there are others which are foolish and Rabka has no patience. He would send the woman back to Vienna—or shut her in the Castle where she will be impotent. So

much I have divined. But what has this to do with me, Anna, mother ? ”

A strange smile crossed the old woman's face.

“ What has it to do with you, my son ? Why, I will tell you. He will shut her in the Castle of Rabka, but the key will be in your hand. Twenty years and more it has been waiting you—to-day I give it over to you that you may unlock the gate.”

She rose from her seat, and fumbling with a great bunch of ancient keys she unlocked the drawer of a buffet and began to empty it. Here was stored an ancient dress of a Gallician noble of twenty years ago, and beneath it, in a little case of vellum, an ornament of pure gold. This the old woman examined with trembling fingers, and eyes to which the tears had gushed. And yet it was no more than a little golden rose with an inscription in the Latin tongue.

“ Here is the key which will unlock the gate, my son. Wear it on your heart where the people may see it. My duty is done—but yours begins to-day.”

Jura had learned to obey the “ little mother ” since he was a mere child—these caves had sheltered him from his very infancy. A habit of obedience, but more than that, a strange sense of impending change, bade him listen to the old woman reverently.

“ What would you then, Anna, mother ? What would you have me to do ? ”

“ Go this night to the Castle. Let your judgment guide you even as the monk has taught. If she be

our enemy, kill her as the people wish ; if she be a friend, save her and show her to the people."

"I will go as you command, little mother, I will do your bidding."

She knew that it would be so, knew that she had but to command, and he would obey. He stood to her for all human love and its interests—and she was sending him, it might be, to his death. This thought brought the tears anew to her eyes.

"It may be, son, that I shall never see you again"

"The good God forbid that, mother."

"But you will remember the little mother—always, Jura?"

He stood up and caught her in his giant arms.

"Have I aught but thee—has this dark world shed light upon my path that was not of thy love? Mother—if I forget thee."

She kissed him as one would kiss a little child.

"You go to the sun, Jura—but you will return again to the night. Almighty God guard you—I have done my duty."

CHAPTER VI

A RUNG IN THE LADDER OF LIFE

HE wore the fine clothes, green and gold and braided, the little mother had given him, and the golden rose was pinned to his breast. The hour was that of twilight, the day a Sunday when Jura the Wise set out from the labyrinth which had been his prison.

And first he quitted the great cave wherein the Monk Arthur had taught him all he knew of life, and Anna, whom men called the witch, had put this oath upon him.

"Swear to me, Jura, son, that Rabka shall hold you prisoner until your hour comes."

And he swore the oath because of his love of her and of his sure knowledge that the things of which she spoke were holy as the mysteries.

The hour had come and Jura was to go forth. The strange clothes which he wore, the golden rose upon his breast did not embarrass him. He sought the river bank again, and swinging his lantern above the water caught shadows of a giant's figure and a soldier's gait. And he was free, free; the black water shut him off no longer from the earth he coveted; the mighty rock should stand no more

between him and the life-giving sun. He was free : the chains had fallen from his limbs and his eyes might look up.

He stood a little while at the water's edge—then plunging into the crevice of the chasm he followed a winding passage of the rock for the third part of a mile, and so came out at last at the foot of an ancient stairway, long forgotten and disused, and littered with the rubble of the years. He had often climbed this in the days of his childhood, but never beyond the second stage. The oath forbade ; the hour had not yet come. To-night it was at hand and he might go forth, with a hope and expectation of the unknown world passing all belief.

There were mighty workings in the eastern galleries, but Rabka had long forgotten them. Some of these in the upper stories were near the home of bear and wolf and of the great vampire bat which terrified the people. Jura was afraid of no living thing, and he passed through the forsaken halls with the sure step and the concentrated gaze of a man who seeks a goal and will not be turned from it. And this endured until he came to the last of the galleries and a sudden draught of the colder air set him shivering as a man with the ague.

They had told him of heat and cold ; the Monk Arthur had spoken of summer and of winter ; of the golden corn and the frozen field—but until this night Jura the Wise had made little of his meaning. Then, in a flash, understanding came and with it

fear. This rushing wind, how if it caught him in its arms and bore him downward? He recalled the traditions of storm and tempest, and stood aghast at them. They had given him no armour against this. Crouching by the wall he waited a little while to see if the blast would shake him again—but it fell soft afterwards as a tide that is ebbing, and his courage returned.

He was a fool to be afraid. Would the little mother have let him go if this were the peril? Had she not assured him that no harm would befall him either at Rabka or its Castle? The thought inspired him to new effort. He climbed the last of the stairs as fast as his beating heart would permit, and running at last down a long gallery he burst out upon the mountain-side and there fell upon his knees before the God who had revealed such a wondrous scene to his ravished eyes.

Wise, in truth, had the little mother been to send her son forth by night and not by day. He, who was of the world and yet a stranger to it, would never have dared to lift his eyes to the glory of the morning sun or the splendour of the noonday. But this scene of night at her zenith bewitched him.

Ah, the majesty of the moonlit mountains to which the steps had carried him, the silvery beams of light playing upon crag and chasm, and far below, the vast silent plain, the unruffled waters of the river and the distant lights of the town where so many of the workers lived! And he was carried up to those heights as his Master, the Christ, before

him—the whole known world seemed to lie at his feet. He was master and the people but his servants.

Such were the vague and wild thoughts which rushed tumultuously to this awakened brain as Jura knelt upon the frozen earth and bowed his head in adoration. A fever of the revelation forbade him to feel the bite of the wind or the breath of the frost. All things were new to him. He espied the black stems of pine-trees and tried to liken them to the trees of his books, whereon the leaves were painted. He saw a village church far below in the hollow and made little of its shape nor understood why it did not fall. The great arc of the infinite heavens appalled him by the majesty of stars. He had the desire to be lifted up far above the world, beyond all fear of the mine and the darkness. He desired the knowledge of God in an ecstasy of the spirit passing all understanding.

* * * * *

A chime in the clock tower of the Castle recalled Jura from his reverie and brought him to earth again. He worshipped the divine but must serve the human. The task upon which "little mother" had sent him was not to be done amid the glories of the mountains, but down there in the woman's home and in the face of those who served her. He did not blame himself for his delay; but as a child who remembers the school-house door, he went laggingly upon his way, turning often to look up to the heights and quitting them as one who would return again. Anon he found himself upon a nar-

row goat-path which sloped in quick descent toward the valley. He followed it and came out upon a high road and perceived the Castle lights not half of a mile from the place where he stood.

He was to go there, Mother Anna had said, and to show himself to Martin, the keeper of the gate. To him he would say that he must speak to the Countess alone. Very frankly the old woman had warned him that this course might be attended by grave perils—"but heed them not," she had said, "for I am watching over you." What this might mean he could not tell; but his faith in the little mother sufficed for all doubts, and he went straight on as though to a star that beckoned him, until he came to the outer gate of the castle and to the lodge where dwelt Martin, the keeper.

A young lad answered his knock, and in reply to a question said that old Martin was at his supper and could not be disturbed. This, however, was before the light showed him the fine habit and the gold braiding upon the shoulders; but directly he perceived them, he saluted bravely and promised that His Excellency should be attended to at once. A moment later, old Martin came out of the house, lantern in hand, and bade the stranger follow him into the shelter of the gateway.

"To see His Excellency, the Count Rudolph," he said as they went. Jura answered quite simply—"No, Martin Dorner, to see the Countess, alone."

"Then you are from Vienna, sir?"

"Nothing of the sort, old Martin. I come from your dead master Phillip, the Wise."

Martin Dorner was a very old man, tottering and feeble and grown grey in the service; but he squared his shoulders at these words and looked the stranger full in the face.

"From my dead master, sir—you!"

"As I say, old Martin. Lift your lantern and look at me."

The old man obeyed, his hands trembling as he raised the lantern. What message was this; what fulfilment of the prophecy which had been uttered in the darkness of Rabka a score of years?

"Do you know me now, Old Martin?"

"I know you, Excellency. God help me, I know you."

"Then do my bidding as I command you. I must see the Countess alone."

"It is impossible, Excellency."

"Is it impossible to him who comes in Phillip's name?"

"His son lies in the altar tomb—who may speak for the lord Count who is dead?"

"The golden rose shall speak, Martin—let your lantern discover it—it is here, old Martin."

The keeper stretched out a trembling finger and touched the petals of the rose one by one—lifted his lantern anew and searched every feature of the man's strong face. Then, with an exclamation which was almost a cry, he unbarred the gate.

"I will do your bidding," he said. "My son shall take you to Her Excellency."

CHAPTER VII

THE INTERVIEW

MARTIN'S son, young Franz, the Major Domo of the Castle, conducted Jura up a wide flight of stairs and left him in a little boudoir upon the first floor. This room was lighted by electric lamps beneath shades of a soft rose tint, and its dainty furniture had come from Paris. The pictures on the walls were by famous French and Italian painters—the books were bound in vellum. The story went that it had been a room sacred to Fransisca, the wife of the great Count Philip the Wise, and that its ornament had been little changed since her death.

Jura knew nothing of this, but his heart beat faster when he entered the room and many new emotions troubled his already agitated brain. Those were chiefly of familiarity and the sense of fore-knowledge which sent him to this apartment as by right and compelled the conviction that days of his life had been lived here before. Natural astonishment at the beauty of the furniture was not absent nor some apprehension at its frailty. He touched the fine things with extended fingers, delighted at their smoothness; he set his feet upon the velvet-pile carpet lightly as though afraid his

tread would injure it. But the electric lamps were no surprise to him, for there were thousands of these in the mines at Rabka, and he had seen beautiful things in Mother Anna's home below the earth.

This spell of wonder concerning the scene gave place quickly to another concerning its people. He had come to the Castle to judge its mistress, as the little mother commanded him, to ascertain how far she was responsible for the people's wrongs; and if the responsibility were brought home to her to kill her in the name of Rabka's freedom. This he would have done without compunction. The primitive faiths of a primitive people were left untouched by Monk Arthur's doctrine. Jura's creed was that of the great Gallician nobles of fifty years ago—he knew nothing of any *via media* or of the persuasive gifts. For the friend, life—for the enemy, death. This was the gospel of the labyrinth.

Ten minutes, perhaps, he waited, his eyes roving from the painted ceiling above to the flaring yellow carpet below. Then the door of the boudoir opened suddenly and Ulusia stood before him.

She wore a gown of lace, cut low at the neck, and her jewels were pearls and diamonds. The rustle of her skirt alone announced her coming, for her white satin shoes fell noiselessly upon the carpet and she did not speak. The man, in his turn, was conscious of an almost overpowering odour of sweet scents—and upon that of new sense of revelation as though the wall had opened and shown him a vision such as the Monk Arthur would see in his ecstasies.

Surely this woman was sent by the Mother of God. For an instant he had the impulse to bend the knee in worship; but when at last she spoke, her voice recalled him instantly to earth and he was the Jura of the Island.

"You wish to see me, sir," she began a little timidly. He raised his head and looked at her.

"I wish to see you, Countess, yes . . ."

"Oh," she cried, recognizing him at once, "but you are the miner they call Jura the Wise. I saw you on the Day of Thanksgiving, did I not?"

"You saw me then, Countess."

"And now—but what does it all mean, why do you wear these clothes? How did you come here?"

Mother Anna had told him that these questions would be asked, and he answered them at once.

"I come to you, lady, in the name of your great ancestor, Philip the Wise, and in his name to judge you."

"To judge me"—her eyes flashed. "What insolence! Do you not know that I could have you flogged for this?"

"I know it very well. While you found servants to obey you, that would be possible—but it would also be very foolish, since that would be the last command you would ever give at Rabka!"

"Oh, you threaten me, then—had I not better summon my servants at once?"

"If it please you to do so, Countess, and you do not wish to hear me."

She crossed the room to the fireplace, by which

there hung a white bell-rope with a gold tassel. This her hand touched, while her flushed cheek and her rapid breathing testified to her anger.

"You are certainly mad," she exclaimed—but she did not ring the bell. "You are mad to come here at all."

"And mad also, Countess, to offer you the golden rose worn by Philip's wife, the lady Fransisca."

He unpinned the ornament from his breast and laid it upon the table.

"Our Holy Father the Pope," he said, "sent that as a gift to the Lady Fransisca thirty-five years ago. I see that you are worthy to wear it in her name. Let it be yours, then, until another shall establish a better claim."

She let the bell-rope go and advanced to the table. Her face was quite white and her eyes alight with curiosity—but common prudence remained to her and a shrewd instinct which nothing could abate.

"Who are you to possess these things," she said. "How did you get this ornament?"

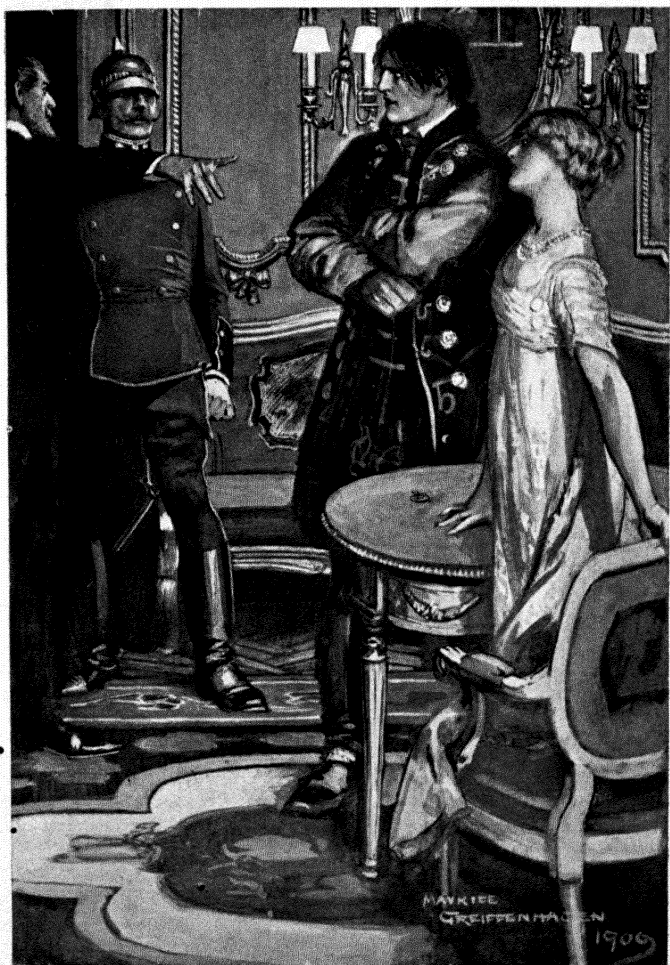
"By a right none may dispute—but I do not choose to tell you what it is."

"But they will make you tell them—others will ask you the question. Do you not know that Count Rudolph is master here?"

"If that is so, you have told me all that I wish to learn. He, then, is responsible for what has been done at Rabka since you came here."

"If anything has been done."

"In your name, Countess."



“There is the man, . . . arrest him.”
[White Walls]

[Page 57.]

She thought upon it an instant and then seated herself at the table.

"You come to speak to me of the people's grievances?"

"Of more than that—of revolution and of danger."

"Then something has been done in my name. What is it?"

"The police are visiting the people's houses to take their children from them. The old right of Parliament is being denied to us. There is a new scale of fine and punishment and the people will not suffer it. Let me warn you—this is done in your name. If it is not by your will, I will tell the people so."

"And then?"

"They will punish the person responsible."

"Your object then in coming here was to be of service to me?"

"To judge you—to blame or praise as the occasion demanded. I find you innocent of the charge.—I am glad that it should be so."

"And if you had found me guilty?"

His embarrassment was not to be hidden.

"God knows then; you are but a child," he said.

She laughed at this but with the sense that she would have wished him to have spoken otherwise. Whatever her answer would have been, however, it remained unspoken—for the door opened at the moment and Count Rudolph, with Wasył, the chief of the police of Rabka, entered unceremoniously.

"There is the man," said the Count, pointing a finger at Jura. "Arrest him."

CHAPTER VIII

ARREST

WASYL, the Captain of the Police, took a step forward and looked very hardly at Jura.

"Why, this is the old woman, Anna's son," said he—and then to Jura himself: "Come, my fine fellow, what are you doing here?"

"My business is with Her Excellency."

"A fine story—how did you get admission to the house?"

"I came by the gate and will go home by the same road."

"Do you know that you can be punished for this?"

"If Her Excellency pleases."

He turned and waited for Ułusia to speak. She had grown very pale and her lips quivered. Count Rudolph meanwhile could not take his eyes from the miner's face. It was as though he had seen a ghost. The Chief of the Police plainly waited for him to speak. He paid no attention to Ułusia.

"Well, Count, and what do you wish me to do?"

"You will arrest this man and hold him a prisoner until I have questioned him. He must answer for this masquerade. You admit that his presence

here is open to suspicion. Look at his dress. The clothes he wears are not his own—they have been stolen."

"It is a lie, Count Rudolph."

"Then you will convince the judge of that. Let him be arrested, Wasyl."

The Captain of the Police turned towards the door to summon his men. It was then that Ulusia spoke.

"No, no," she cried—with unusual vehemence. "I will not have this man arrested."

"Excellency, you heard the Count."

"By what right does he give orders in my house?"

"My dear lady, have you considered the alternative? Do you wish to receive any scoundrel who forces his way into your private apartments?"

"That is my business, Count. When I ask your advice it will be time enough to give it. This man will go as he came. I believe him to be honest."

"I cannot understand it, Countess—a mere workman."

"You know that he is not that, Count."

She faced him boldly now and he flinched from her attack. Whatever the reason, Rudolph was much agitated by this discovery and had no art to conceal what he felt. Possibly he knew the truth at which Ulusia had not even made a guess. His pretended compliance was an afterthought, inspired by the idea that this was neither the hour nor the place of reckoning.

"Very well," he said at last, "the police, then, will conduct him to his house. If that is your wish."

"It is my wish that he goes alone."

"So be it then. But you are prepared for the consequences, Countess?"

"I am prepared for the consequences, Count."

She turned to Jura and held out her hand, and he with an inherited instinct for the grand manner stooped and kissed it.

"You are wise to act as you have done," he exclaimed quite naturally. "These men here are foolish, and must answer to the people. I will see that they do so—but you, Countess, you will find the people your friend."

He turned upon his heel and left the room. There were two of the household police in the great stone corridor outside, but they, failing to recognize one of the "black gallery" people in the presence of this fine man with the courtier's clothes, saluted him and permitted him to go upon his way. So he returned to Martin the gate-keeper much to that worthy's amazement.

"Look to yourself," that old fellow stammered, "the police are after you, Excellency. If you have come as I suppose to tell them——"

"I come to tell them nothing, Martin."

"Then the hour is not yet?"

"It is not yet, Martin."

"God guard you wherever you may be, Excellency. I have always known you would return."

Jura made no answer to this. Let it be said that

he knew little of a truth which this old man perceived and Rudolph of Trieste had apprehended. Mother Anna's words had been enigmatical. He had a destiny: the time would come when he must do a great work for Rabka. All this she had taught him at the monk's bidding—but what was the nature of the mission or why he had been chosen she never said. So the faith remained with him without the knowledge. She would protect him, she who was his divinity.

In truth he troubled about the matter very little when he quitted the Castle gate and set out for the mountains. It was the hour of eleven now and the moonlight glorious. Again that vigour of the sweet night air intoxicated him and fired his senses; but it was accompanied now by the vision of the girl who had received him at Rabka and of her beauty. How dumb and helpless he had felt before her, he who never had cringed to human being in all his life. How white her skin was, what delicate hands she had, how round and supple were her limbs. But chiefly he thought of her womanhood, understanding, perhaps, for the first time since he was born the meaning of the word.

With love as a mere plea for human passion, Jura was quite familiar. The stories of the "black galleries" had been a theme for politicians even in the Parliament at Buda. Well he knew the poor creatures who flitted as vampires about the dark places of the mine—Monk Arthur had taught him to pity and to help them. But here was an aspect

of womanhood of which he had never dreamed. And some day, he said, some man would possess Ulusia and call her his wife. The thought troubled him as a madness. He strode up the hill-side with firm tread, spurning the snow. He wondered that the little mother could so torture him as to send him to that house.

And now he must return to the mines again. A great horror of this fell upon him and fettered his steps. The whole world below, with its darkness, its mysteries, its eternal gloom, how should he suffer it now? Never during the long years of waiting had he believed it possible thus to abjure his kingdom and dominion; but he would have abjured them freely this night.

Here was something to forbid return. Another, perhaps, would have thought of his own peril and remembered that such a man as Rudolph of Trieste had yet to be dealt with. A child's chivalrous advocacy could be of little service to him to-morrow when accusation must come. Had he truly been wise or fearful he would have hastened to the eastern galleries whither the police would not have dared to follow him. He did not do so, held by the allurements of that scene of night and by the glamour of his thoughts. For how should a man hidden in Rabka's depths hope to see the Lady Ulusia again and what in life could make amends for such banishment as this? Nay, he halted his steps upon the thought and returned a little way down the path again. The darkness of the hours of dawning found

him still in the mountains. He was there when the day shimmered in the Orient, and the rising sun witnessed his abjection.

Now, this was a stupendous hour and one that few had lived. Jura knew nothing of the day but what the mind pictures had taught him. The world of night had been sympathetic ; he understood it and was master of himself. But this—this glory of the East—this majesty of light and life, sweeping the stars from the heavens, firing the mountain peaks with a thousand hues, searching the valleys, discovering the cities—what should he know of this if it were not fear and humiliation ? Nay, he stood as one smitten by the judgment—his limbs trembling beneath him, his hands lifted to the sun.

It had not come upon him suddenly. The earliest greys of the dawn discovered him awake and wondering. He watched the light creeping from dome to dome, saw it stealing as the pallor upon a dead man's face, across the untrodden fields of snow ; and this, as the books had taught him, was the herald of the day. Its greater miracle lay in the self revelation it brought. He touched his hands and was amazed to see them so white ; bared his arm and felt the skin of it ; looked down at his clothes and could not wholly understand the metamorphosis of self, the creation of what had not been yesterday.

And then the sun rose and the man ceased to think of such things at all and could but gaze entranced at that ball of golden fire which black night had vomited above the mountains.

Oh, the surpassing revelation of the light—the awe, the fear, the mute worship. He beheld a thousand changing hues upon the face of the snow and could have cried for very delight of them. The warmth upon his bared arms was as a kiss of passion which a lover might not return. To him, as to the ancients, the sun stood for the Lord God of heaven and of earth. He could have run forward toward it, believing ignorantly that this would bring him nearer to the throne. The aspect of the world below, white and glorious and re-born, seemed to him beyond all the beauties of the fables which the Monk Arthur had taught him. Here was the heaven which the saints depicted—this was the abode not of men but of spirits. He was conscious of them all about him; the sun had given birth to them.

He lay in profound awe, face downwards to the ground. And so, a little after the hour of eight o'clock, the police, who had been searching the mine all night, came upon him suddenly and threw him to the ground. He did not resist them immediately—but when they carried him back to the Eagles' Tower, which lay at the fort of Rabka's Castle, and there locked him in the dungeon of a keep which had stood a thousand years, he uttered a cry so pathetic that even his keepers were touched.

And this was for the Sun God, whom he had found and lost again.

CHAPTER IX

THE QUESTION

THEY carried him to the Eagles' Tower of Rabka and left him there until the escort should take him to the town and the judge should try him.

There is quasi-military law in the mine and by this the question must be judged—whether he had counselled mutiny and had named himself the leader of the rebels. If he were found guilty, his friends would see him no more and his home be the penal settlement.

Meanwhile there was the journey to the court, and so shrewd a man as Rudolph of Trieste knew better than to permit it by day. This fellow was almost a prophet to the people, they would burn and slay to rescue him if the truth of his imprisonment were known. So the edict went that the journey must be by night and stealthily, and meanwhile that the prisoner should lie in the Eagles' Tower, where many a poor wretch had been lashed to death in the forgotten days of darkness and the rack had burst asunder many a miscreant when there was no law but that of Rabka's prince.

To the Eagles' Tower at mid day came Rudolph himself to visit his prisoner.

It was odd that the Count had never feared this man before, but now he feared him with the dread apprehension of one who realized a peril he would not have confessed and was determined to prove it to its depths.

Jura sat upon a low stool when the Count entered ; his eyes were fixed upon a narrow window by which the sunbeams came quivering through the air until they seemed to rest upon his face and to set it tingling with delight. Little he cared for bolts or bars while the day was with him and the images of yesterday. Faith showed him the woman's face as that of a Madonna upon a throne. What cared he for liberty while such a vision was his.

" So we have you caged at last, my man."

He looked up and saw the Count watching him with evil eyes. Habit sent him to his feet but rather as judge than suppliant.

" I do not know what you mean, Lord Count."

" We shall teach you then—do you not understand that I have the power to send you to Cracow to the judges? "

" You have the power when the people confer it upon you. Until that day, no child is as helpless, Lord Count."

Rudolph did not answer this. He had heard the same thing from the same lips many times before. A greater question remained to be put. He had eyes but for the prisoner's face, ears but for the tone of a voice which seemed to be speaking from the grave.

"You are the son of the woman they call Anna, the Witch," he exclaimed presently, "I wish to know the name of your father."

Jura's brow darkened—the veins upon his forehead swelled as a man convulsed by passion and by anger.

"By what right do you put this question to me?"

"By the desire to help you if you have any claim upon those who employ you."

Jura laughed scornfully.

"You come to me with this lie upon your lips, then—I am to go to Cracow, I am to be helped—is it that I must choose, Lord Count?"

Rudolph turned about and looked him in the face.

"Yes," he said slowly, "that you choose. I am conceding much—your influence with the men, the faith they place in your judgment—these weigh with me. Turn them to my interests and I will make you a captain of the Upper Gallery. Is that a proposition you can understand?"

"I understand it perfectly, Lord Count."

"And you are willing to enter into an understanding with me?"

Jura strode towards him.

"An understanding which shall help you to banish the Lady Ulusia from Rabka."

"I did not say so."

"It lies in your words, Lord Count."

"And if it does . . . what then?"

"You are a very brave man."

"Ah, a compliment."

"A very brave man to say such things to me, who have it in my power to punish you for them."

Rudolph started back.

"What boasting is this?" he cried, "do you not know that the law permits me to flog you for such a threat as that?"

"It does not permit you, Lord Count, or you would have done it long ago. Nevertheless, if you will bring in your whips——"

"You shall go to Cracow. We will hear what they will say to you there——"

"If the people permit it—I have said so before." He folded his arms, an habitual gesture, and waited for the other to speak. But Rudolph quitted the cell abruptly, his question unanswered, his purpose unfulfilled.

And yet in a measure he had succeeded—for had not this man been unable to say whose son he was and had not the very question put him to shame?

Rudolph resolved to send him that night to Cracow upon a charge of insubordination and mutiny. It seemed to him that he might yet escape the peril he had associated with the name of Jura the Wise, but he knew that he must act secretly and swiftly or all would be lost.

CHAPTER X

ULUSIA AT THE EAGLES TOWER

IT would have been about six o'clock of the day when the door of Jura's cell opened for the second time and Ulusia entered. Franz, old Martin's son, had carried the news to her that the people's ambassador had been arrested at dawn and then lay in the Eagles' Tower. He, also, conducting her by the old cloister, which the lords of Rabka had used through the centuries, to the gate of the Tower, there spoke a secret word to the sentinels, and obtained the interview she desired.

She looked a mere child as she entered that gloomy abode—a ray of the golden sunshine searching out a dark place and lighting it with her radiance.

Vienna had gowned her, it is true, but with Vienna's art. Her robe of Murillo's blue had sable upon it, but was a young girl's robe, none the less. She wore no jewels save the gold pins in her hair—a light cloak fell from her shoulders, but did not conceal her shapely figure nor the fine contour of her neck. Chiefly, however, the eyes spoke to the man, those eyes which had searched the mystery yesterday and were here to-day to pursue it still.

She entered the cell with elfish tread and closing the door swiftly behind her she faced the prisoner

and brought him to his feet. Jura had turned his back upon the window since the Sun God had hidden his face and was now in a moody reverie which went near to being a dream.

"Sir," she exclaimed, stammering an excuse, "I have come here to learn why they arrested you in my house."

"Yes," he said with a kindly smile—and then, "I have been waiting for you to come."

Ulusia thrust back the tousled hair from her white forehead with a schoolgirl's gesture and then spoke again—but almost as one who despaired of making herself understood.

"Oh," she said, "if you could tell me. They speak in fables every one. I ask a question and they answer—it will be so when Philip shall come to Rabka again. Here is something to open every door. I pass by your jailors in Philip's name—the name of my uncle who had been dead these twenty years. Cannot you tell me what this means?"

Jura, understanding perfectly that no fable had brought her to the Eagles' Tower, thrust a stool forward and bade her sit.

"These are very ignorant people," he said quietly, "the name of your uncle Philip was rightly held in much esteem among them for he was the greatest prince that Rabka has ever known. But that was before his wife's death. Reason failed him afterwards when his only son was taken from him and thereafter your father, his younger brother, ruled. The people did not love him, Countess. Death

saved him from a judgment which would have been worse than death—and then the Count of Trieste succeeded in your name. Are you surprised that the tales should follow—and that there should be some ignorant enough to believe that the great Philip will return—even from the grave ? ”

She listened patiently, her head buried in her hands.

“ Rabka has been my dream,” she said at length, “ since I was old enough to know anything at all. The sisters used to show me pictures of the mines and tell me about them. I made up my mind that I would follow in the great Philip’s footsteps, child that I was. I thought it would be so easy. And now they tell me that the only wise man here will go to Cracow to-night to stand before the judges. What shall I say to them ? What shall I do to help the people ? ”

“ You will see that they have justice—I shall aid you.”

“ But you—you are a prisoner and you go to Cracow to-night.”

He laughed, and rising upon an impulse, he walked towards the narrow window and gripped the bars of it with giant hands.

• “ Look,” he said, “ this is what I do with their locks ”—and he tore the bars from the rotting mortar as others a reed from a river’s bank.

“ But thrice a man’s height between me and the road where lies liberty—do you speak to me of a prison, Countess ? ”

" But you remain here—you consent to this ? "

He came and stood beside her.

" That I might see you again."

She shivered a little at the words and instinctively drew the cloak about her throat.

" You know that I am quite powerless here," she said, " I am but twenty-one and Count Rudolph is master of the mine for two years yet."

" Not master for a single day unless I wish it, Countess."

" But you—you—who are you to wish these things ? "

" One who can command the people to obedience."

" By what powers, by what right ? "

" By the right which superstition ever confers upon good will. They know that I will not betray them. They have never seen me afraid."

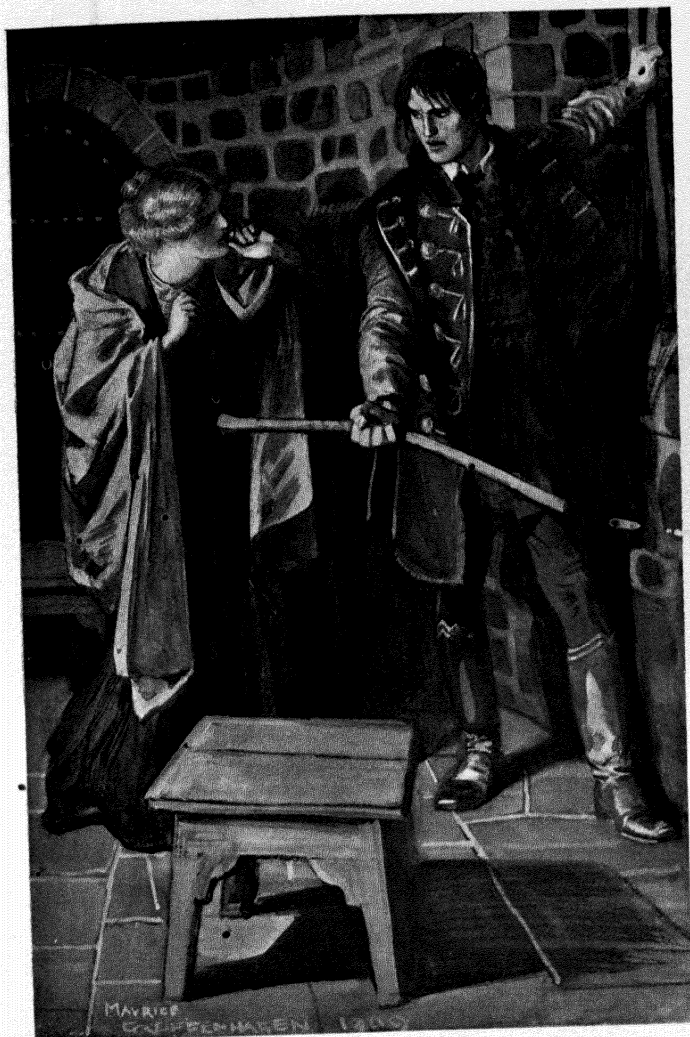
" And you are the son of the old woman they call Anna the Witch ? "

" It is so, Countess, I am her son."

She sighed, but did not dare to confess her disappointment. Destiny was dealing strangely with her—saying yesterday, " the world is at your feet ; " but to day speaking of coming years of regret and of desire. The mistress of Rabka and this people's son. Oh, impossible, impossible !

" They tell me," she continued presently, " that you are a man of good education—and that you were the pupil of the Monk Arthur who was banished from Rabka five years ago—is that the truth ? "

" It is the truth—to him I owe all that one man



"But you remain here?"

White Walls]

[Page 72.

ULUSIA AT THE EAGLES' TOWER 73

can owe to another. But I have repaid, Countess, for I have kept the oath."

"He put that upon you——"

"That I would not leave the mine until the appointed hour should come."

"He named it then——?"

"In prophecy but not in years. I am content, however, for now I perceive his wisdom. By him my people shall win freedom."

"But are they not free? Do we not live in days of freedom? Who can enslave them while there is the law?"

"The law looks not into the right, Countess. Come with me to the galleries and I will show you such sights that you shall not sleep or eat because of them."

"I will come," she said, "you shall show me everything—if they do not take you to Cracow."

"And if they do——?"

"I will follow you. I will plead with the judges. They shall hear the truth."

A strange light came into the man's eyes as he heard these words and acting upon a sudden impulse he knelt and kissed her hand. She trembled anew at the warm touch of his lips—her whole body quivered, her lips became dry and parched.

"Fear not," he said, "the day of my captivity is not yet. But you, Countess, fear rather for yourself."

"For myself?"

"I have said it. I will go to the people truly, but

how if they will not hear me. Oh, I have known it to be so—I have seen their madness, I, Jura, whom all obey. What if they turn from me this night ? ”

“ The soldiers will carry you to Cracow, then ? ”

“ I do not fear it—what I fear may not be told to you. This is neither the time nor——”

He stood irresolute unable to express himself. A heavy step upon the stairs without helped his confusion. Franz, old Martin’s son, had come up with grave news.

“ Excellency,” he said as he burst in upon them, “ the cavalry has ridden in and the Count is with their officer. You will do well to return with me.”

Ulusia knew not what to answer. She stood upon an impulse and searched Jura’s face with plaintive eyes. Was he a boaster then—did the ass bray in the lion’s skin ?

“ They have come for you,” she said. He answered with head erect.

“ I am ready for them, Countess.”

“ Oh,” she exclaimed, in a frenzy of passionate disappointment, “ have you not shown me the road : why do you not take it ? ”

“ I wait for the people. Do you not hear them telling me that this is the hour. Return as you came, Countess, I will see you in your own house before the sun shall rise.”

Again he stooped and kissed her hand as one who was bidding her a brief farewell. Afar, through the open lattice she could hear the murmur of men and

the blast of bugles. The sounds waxed and magnified until they came as a tempest's voice moaning and angered above a solitude. There was something awesome in this, and she fled from it, closing her ears as she crossed the cloister and hardly daring to think about it at all until she found herself in her own room and the door shut upon the sounds. There she would have asked herself many troublesome questions, but for the sudden advent of Count Rudolph and the grave tidings he brought.

"The miners are out," he said as he entered, "I think you had better leave the place at once."

She laughed, throwing aside her cloak and not at all unwilling that he should know where she had been.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "a counsel of prudence. You prefer me in Vienna, Count."

Rudolph was much excited but he did not abandon that deferential manner which he had adopted towards her since they quitted the convent gate together.

"I might reproach you," he said quickly, "it would be unjust, for the fault lay elsewhere. These people are offered a hundred chances of betterment—schools, doctors, cleanliness, good order—they refuse them. Why? Because they believe that a woman is about to rule over them, and that they can impose upon her. Your father had been wiser to say Vienna, Countess, I see it now.

She laughed, remembering his more tender sentiments.

"Your devotion would have spent itself in trains," she rejoined, "perhaps my poor father thought of that."

"At least he would say that I have wished to be your friend."

"While the people see in this interloper their enemy. Oh, they'll be grateful enough by and by, Count . . . when the woman has gone. She has her toys to play with . . . are they not saying that in Rabka?"

"They are saying something much more dangerous, dear lady."

"And not far removed from Anna's son. . . . I know it, I have just seen him."

"You—have see him!"

"I am just come from the Eagles' Tower."

"But he is a madman, a fanatic. Were it not for him there would not be cavalry at Rabka to-night."

"Assuredly, since you send him to Cracow."

"Not so—the magistrates refuse the order. There is no wrong in Gallicia to-day, it seems, if you can get people enough to claim a right. Everything is for the working man. The government is afraid . . . they put the whips in our hands and strike at us if we use them. This man sets a thousand talking of their grievances and is not to be punished. Well, where's your law and order then?"

"Since you are responsible for them, should not I ask you the question, Count. No one could tell me that in Vienna and I think it must be answered soon."

She bade him listen. The tide of the angry human sea was rising again and its voice could be heard even here within the Castle walls. "Death to the woman," the people cried; and upon that uttered the name of Jura the Wise. Well for Ulusia that she heard but indistinctly as one who listens to the thunder of a tempest from a secure and well-known shelter. The Count, however, guessed the truth. His work had been done too well. The house of a woman's dominion might fall . . . but how if it crushed him as it fell and overwhelmed him in a universal ruin?

"They must be told that Jura is free," he said;
"I will go out to them."

And then he said significantly—

"I think it will have to be Vienna to-morrow."

CHAPTER XI

THE STORM BREAKS

THE rumour that Jura the Wise had been taken was first bruited in the mines as the men quitted their work at dusk. A woman gave tongue to it—the old White Witch passing from gallery to gallery to tell the story.

And first upon the lake where her son had been master of the boats: “They have taken him,” she cried to those who roved these black waters—and the cry echoed beneath the great vault of rock as a voice from the caverns of the nether world.

“They have taken him—my son.”

She was a weird figure, God knows, not a little prone to dramatic perception and quite aware of the character the people had given her. Dressed in a flowing robe of dark crimson, her hair matted and unkempt, her eyes blazing, a torch in her hand—she uttered the doleful tidings. The police looked at her askance unwilling to act. Had not the word gone forth already that the cavalry were sent back? Better not pick the chestnuts from such a fire as this.

And so she went unharmed—and so at her call the pits vomited their dregs of humanity and the dread creatures came forth. Now it would be blear eyed

men, half naked and armed with giant clubs; anon the women of the Black Gallery, dishevelled, drunken and reeling. These called louder than the others for vengeance upon Ulusia, and, brandishing their weapons, they pressed upwards, to the stages above where the street was telling of the closing day and many a workman was going to his home.

“ They have taken him—my son.”

Even the soberest of those who passed by must listen to this harridan in masquerade. Had not Jurā been the chosen ambassador—was he not sent at the wish of them all to see the Countess and bargain with her? So much old Anna had contrived even before she sent her son to Rabka's castle. The Committee of Union had approved his mission—and now he was taken, the ambassador held hostage, his overtures repulsed. And by a girl of twenty-one who had come to them for the first time, it seemed but yesterday. Surely this was intolerable.

They gathered in their groups discussing it. The Committee, it was said, had already met and sent an ultimatum to Count Rudolph. This and that must be done. He was the master still—why did he permit another to dictate to him? They would stand nothing from the woman. Let her go back to Vienna as she had come. Such was their decree—but while they waited for the answer the storm broke and carried them upon it as a rushing river bears its wreckage—headlong to the distant and unknown sea.

Now, old Anna contrived this; her's were the words which fired the people, her's the tongue which drove the rabble upward as devils from the nether hell to the sleeping world above.

Darkness was but newly fallen when the great white road leading to the Castle gates became black with people. A thousand torches shed their flecks of crimson upon the trampled snow—a thousand fierce oaths were uttered almost at every step. Little these wayfarers cared for any counsels of delay, for Committee's decree or words of prudence. The fever of vengeance possessed them—they were out to burn and slay, and God help those who opposed them.

True, there were obstacles by here and there. Did not the police oppose at the very outset—the Captain of the Guard showing himself with fifty mounted men and seeking to hem the people in? He, be sure, cursed the orders from Vienna and would have strangled the Government which issued them. Just a whiff or two of good powder with a few honest bullets to mark the argument and there would be an end both of condition and decree.

But Vienna said, "No! Strong measures must not be taken unless the case were desperate." And the Captain knew better than to risk his rank for zeal which Vienna might refuse to justify. For this prudence he paid with his life. A ruffian shot him while he sat and argued with them—and he fell headlong from his horse to the road, where

they spurned his body and trampled it. Thereafter nothing forbade. The fifty police overwhelmed by a torrent went under in a twinkling and were seen no more. Pistols, knives, clubs were the argument now—you would have needed a battalion to have kept the people back.

From this phalanx of desperadoes, of men whose veins throbbed to the bâton of fever; of women whose laughter was the blood cry, the warning went up to the Castle and was heard by Rudolph as he parleyed with Ulusia. When he left her and came out upon the Castle terrace it seemed to him that the city beneath the earth had given every son she possessed to this assault and that few of the women could have lagged behind. Standing on a high place of the ramparts, he beheld the coteries of dancing lights below—a white snow-bound country but the hither plain now black with people.

Irresistible, as a tempest of the mountains, the miners' army swept on. The shrill penetrating watchword spoke of death; the hills gave it back in echoes which lingered.

He was afraid now. This man of the subtleties was for subtlety no longer.

By here and there, gathered in little groups upon the wall, were the servants of the Castle ready to speak plain truths. "Give the prisoner up to them," said Franz, the steward's son. A lieutenant of police could think of no device less humiliating—and he did not know at that time of his captain's death. When another more discerning declared that the

Castle could hold out against twenty such mobs as this, Rudolph bit his nails but did not thank him. He was cursing the hour which brought a woman to Rabka—perhaps thinking of his own folly in playing the game so clumsily.

He should have hastened with a slower step. His love of dominion had brought him to this pass—for he had ruled Rabka so long that the shadow of approaching eclipse was intolerable. A determination to marry Ulsia had been linked to his resolution that, whatever befell, she should never be the mistress of her own. It would all have gone so well but for this mystery of a man come up out of the darkness to thwart him. Who was the fellow then? Was it possible to believe, as he had believed last night, that the dead Count Philip—but Rudolph thrust that thought aside as incredible.

"We must telegraph to Cracow, he said to Franz, "let the Government take the responsibility. They have recalled the cavalry. Very well, let them know what is happening, and then hear what they say. Write an urgent message—the miners are in arms, the Castle is besieged. You must spare no words. Our safety lies in it."

The man saluted and went out to do his bidding. There was a telegraph station within the Castle and the line ran direct thence to Cracow. There should be cavalry at Rabka again before morning if the wisacres in authority were not mad. Meanwhile what mattered the howling of the wolves below? Would not the gate hold? Would it not defy ten

times their number? Rudolph had hardly uttered the words when he beheld the mob swarming on the first of the terraces below. And then he perceived that his argument had omitted to reckon with ladders; ladders dragged from the engine sheds haphazard and set against the giant walls by men who climbed like monkeys.

These were the advance guard, daring fellows with the hands and feet of apes and the tenacity of the mountain goat. They cared not at all though their comrades fell and lay shattered upon the stone of the glacis by the gate. Their goal stood up yonder where the lights twinkled and the servants were huddled in fear. There the woman lived and thence they would drag her. When they had a footing on the wall and could send detachments to the gates their work was done. By hundreds now the mob entered the Castle grounds and swarmed upward to the terraces. Flaming torches became as lanterns swinging on the hill-side so that a stranger would have named this a fête day and listened for the blare of trumpets. But the music was that of human voices attuned to the savagery of wolves. They were as wild beasts that hunted and their prey was a woman.

Such was the mob which climbed at last to the terrace whereon stood Rudolph and the lieutenants of police; and the Count was the first who compelled them to hear any sort of reason. After all, he had not been such a bad master—and if it were true that all their afflictions were to be set down

to the woman's influence, well, it remained for them to give him liberty. Meeting him face to face, the leaders lifted their torches aloft and put their demands.

"We are come for our comrade, he whom they name Jura the Wise."

Rudolph stepped forward and tried to assume his old mastery.

"Have you no leaders among you," he asked, "is the Committee then become a rabble? Do you not know that there is a proper way to ask these things? Have I ever forbidden you to come to me with your grievances?"

They admitted the truth of it, and one, a hollow-cheeked man with the eyes of a ferret, declared that their quarrel was not with the Count.

"If you are our friend," said he, "you will give us back our comrade. Then we will listen to you, but not until then."

Others took it up and spread abroad the impetus of impatience. Let the argument be what it might they must have their comrade. Foolish to wrangle with a thousand since no argument could keep that seething rabble back. Let their request be refused and they would answer for nothing—the very Castle might be burned while they waited. To all of which Rudolph could answer but by exclamation or protest.

Was he the keeper of the Eagle's^B Tower? Did they expect to find the keys in his hands? This man, this friend of theirs, must he not be taught to

behave himself? Harm, however, had not come to him and he would be sent back to them to-morrow. Further concessions might be granted at the proper time, but for the present he could say but this, that if they would consent to quit the Castle grounds immediately he would accompany them himself to the Eagles' Tower and set their man free—a sentiment they liked so well that they shouted it a hundred times to those below and set the hillside ringing with it. Jura was to be released—surely it was the ultimate surrender.

And now it was a high strung joyous rabble, turning from the Castle itself toward the Southern ramparts and the Eagles' Tower. Some went singing and dancing as fools to a fair. There were wild lads turning somersaults upon the snow-bound grass and laughing they knew not why. The women went all together, believing that they were helping their husbands and their lovers. But the outposts ran and did not cease to run until they had come to the tower's foot and touched its tremendous walls with fingers which itched to destroy them there and then.

Now this tower lies to the south of the Castle, upon an angle of the rampart which is here thrust far out into the hollow of the mountains. Viewed from the heights, it is seen across the chapel and the stables, a grim grey building which could tell as fine a tale of human misery as any prison in Galicia. Men, they say, have been bricked into its very walls for the delight of monsters the mediae-

val age had bred. There are implements of torture dreadful to the mere imagination. Iron Maidens whose spikes close in upon the eyes, the heart, the brain of the victims; machines which tear the flesh from the living body, tortures of fire and water and the rack, harboured to-day that men may speak and think of an age of mercy and thank God that they were not as these ancients.

But to the ignorant of Rabka, the tower is what it ever was. There, says the multitude, things are done by the police of which none hear; nor any victim is released to tell. The old dread remains and is potent for discipline—though, in truth, it is but a fable and there is as much justice for these poor miners as for any prince in the proud city of Vienna. But the people will have none of it. They were still the children of an ancient story when they flung themselves upon those massive walls that night and cried for Jura the Wise to be given back to them. He, surely, had known the torture in those brief hours of captivity—but God witness their vengeance if other harm had befallen him.

It was a moment of intense expectancy, a scene Rabka may not behold again in all its years. The police supported by those who had derided them, formed a ring of steel about the tower's gate and thrust the outposts back. Rudolph himself, a fine figure in his coat and cap of fur and one to please the people, went up with the lieutenants to the tower's gate and bade the keeper open. A thousand eyes watched him enter the place—a thousand

hearts beat high with hope when the wicket was shut behind him and the police closed up before it. Surely now their night's work was done. They would welcome their ambassador as Rabka should welcome him and carry him triumphantly to the depths. Ay, and then what a night in the streets and cafés five hundred feet below the ground. Let them wreak their vengeance upon the woman afterwards; their account against her would stand if Jura were free.

So they waited in some patience. What horse-play marked the interlude was kept for the outer circumference of a rabble circle, where youths, caring nothing for principles, became acrobatic in practice, and shrieking harridans made merry in the intervals. The sadness of a great hope seemed of a sudden to affect the people, heretofore the subjects of joy. A mood of silence fell upon the multitude, as though it were awed of its own success. Emotional women wept then and men kissed each other upon the cheeks. Jura was coming out to them. He would speak to the people, his children, and tell them he was free—he would lead them to liberty as he had led them so often. This they said in hushed whispers—but, anon, breaking the unnatural silence, they asked in louder tones: Why did he delay? Was it a trick then? Ah, here was the Count coming out of the tower. He would tell them.

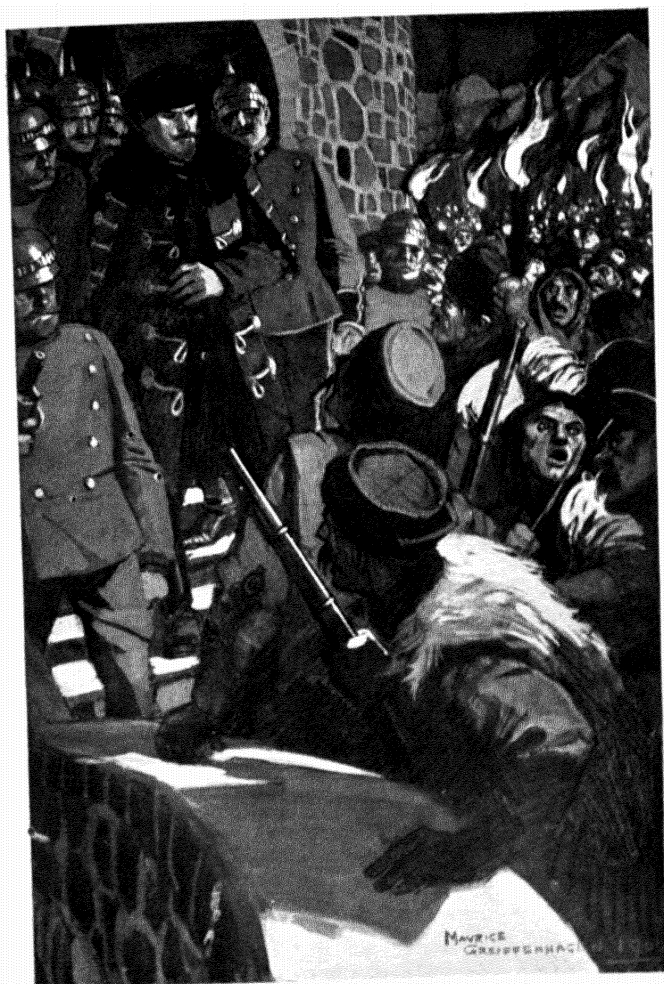
There is a little flight of stone steps leading to the door of Rabka's prison, and upon this the Count

dwelt awhile as he emerged from the tower and showed his pale face to the multitude. It was to be observed that the police closed in about him and that one of the lieutenants drew a pistol from his holster and made a clumsy attempt to shield it in a white gloved hand. The people themselves were so still that they might have been shadows of the night. The moon had risen and shone down upon the scene.

"My friends," said the Count, speaking very slowly, "I cannot release the prisoner for he is already free."

For a little while no one spoke. Then as a wail from afar a woman's voice was heard crying "death to them."

The threat spread as a story of fire. The Castle of Rabka itself was in flames before the hour had run.



"Death to them."

White Walls

[Page 88.]

CHAPTER XII

THE CASTLE IS FIRED

ULUSIA understood events but little when Count Rudolph went out to reason with the miners. She had neither friend nor counsellor at Rabka—the old Bishop, the amiable Heinrich, having established her in the home of her ancestors, returned to Strepitza, there to drone out his office and to deserve by his kindness and charity the common appellation of “blessed.” He would return, he said, when diocesan affairs permitted. Ulusia cared not at all when that might be.

There was, of course, that sour-faced old Baroness, who had been fetched from the whited sepulchre of her gaieties to play the part of companion in the Castle.

The Baroness had but one topic of the table, a topic which concerned the doings and the sayings, the virtues and the lack of virtues of the great army of males which had delighted to march past her in the great day of her youth. All else gave place to this. A fig for your Rabka. It was very wonderful, of course, and in the scheme of benign providence that men should toil below the ground to get good money for those who did

not toil above. But that a woman should interest herself in such things—impossible!

Ulusia, then, had no one but herself to look to; and child that she was, her perception did not fail her. She detected the schemer in Rudolph before she had been many hours in Rabka. His attempts to make love to her and to ape passion he plainly did not feel were rather pathetic than ludicrous. She knew from the outset that he feared her coming dominion and would hinder it. Perhaps her youth forbade her to realize that he was far from being a clever man; and certainly she was not prepared for that precipitate folly which contrived this night's work or for the issue so amazing and so inevitable.

'The miners were in revolt—why?' Was it because she had come to Rabka or because of Rudolph's shrewd diplomacy? She took the latter view: but being quite frank with herself she admitted that the whole affair could be dismissed as tiresome but for the chief actor in it. Of money she knew little, nor troubled herself about it. The Castle was gloomy beyond any house of her imagination, and she perceived clearly what they all meant when they said that she would return to Vienna presently and think of the mines no more. She knew that she would have done so if it had not been for Jura the Wise and the words he had spoken. But here was a mystery which passed her comprehension.

Had she not been a little schoolgirl yesterday, taught to believe that the world was a very dread-

ful place and chiefly dreadful because men ruled it? As a raging lion, seeking whom he might devour, so the good sisters spoke of man. Ulusia, of course, knew that this was not true—for her good uncle, the Bishop, devoured little except honest mutton and not even that in Lent; while the only other man of whom she had seen much was her music master, who taught her to play Chopin's nocturnes and Beethoven's sonatas while Sister Catherine sat in the room and kept her eye on him. Still, he was not of the hungry species—and for the rest, the girls at the convent went in no particular fear of this gruesome fate, and continued nightly to invent their romances of prince and noble and all the paraphernalia of inevitable marriage.

Ulusia liked the play as well as any of them, although her innocence was absolute. When release came and her uncle conducted her to her father's house she had been the schoolgirl still, knowing absolutely nothing of life and quite without curiosity. From this state she had passed in an instant into that nebulous region where wonders of revelation awaited her and all the doubt and fear and hope inseparable from it.

Oh, yes, she thought that she knew now of what the good sisters had spoken when the devouring lion was the theme. If, in reality, she knew little, none the less awakening had come; and at the bidding of one who had seen the sun for the first time in manhood at her desire. This was the miracle; this also the burden of the secret. She

knew that she desired to see this man again; she remembered how she had trembled in his presence, been ashamed to look in his face and fearful that he should discover the rapid beating of her heart because she stood before him. And he was but a miner, a son of the people, and she might as usefully speak of love for him as for any scullion in the Castle kitchen.

* * * * *

She heard the sound from afar, witnessed the departure of the Count and then remembered that she had neither dressed nor dined. A gong reverberating in the hall reminded her of the lapse, and she ran up the wide stone stairs to her bedroom headlong, to the great dismay of the agitated Baroness who was descending at that very moment.

"Ah, my dear child, do you not hear the bells. It will all be cold, I perish with hunger."

Dinner was the one and only event of the day for the Baroness von Elwitza—if it were not a little piquet for moderate stakes afterwards—and Ulusia used to declare that a tear stood in her eye for every moment of delay. But she consoled her to-night with the assurance that she would be ready before the men had carried in the soup, and so entered her bedroom and began to dress anyhow. Coat and skirt went headlong to the bed; she rapped down her shoes as though they had been hammers; her stockings were thrown to the maid as balls in a game. Clear cold water—none of the modern creams for Ulusia von Erlach—refreshed her greatly,

and she delighted in it and prolonged her ablutions despite the crisis. When this was done and her hair combed with angry violence; she slipped on a Vienna gown as though it were flimsy, and taking brushes from her maid's hands noticed for the first time the pallor of the girl's face and the evident agitation she suffered.

"What is the matter with you, Claudine?"

The girl was from Paris and proud enough of the fact. But her courage was higher in Paris than in Rabka—and had she not been engaged to serve in Vienna?

"There is everything the matter, madame. The miners are coming here to burn the house. I am surprised that you do not hear them, madame!"

Ulusia put down her brushes on the table and listened intently. Yes, she could hear the sounds now. They rose and fell as the omens of tempest, now waxing, now waning with the mournful note of winds. She had heard the same sounds before to-night, but they had been too distant then for her to understand their deeper meaning. The men, she knew, had come out to demand redressal of their grievances—it was a common story at Rabka, they told her; but this new ferocity, this howling of human wolves was beyond all understanding. She put her brushes down and went over to the window. A cold clear night permitted her to see the whole environment, the distant plain, the white mountains, the terraces descending in steps to the valley. This was some little while after Rudolph

had gone to the Eagles' Tower and a quick glance toward that gloomy prison convinced her that it was not the object of the people's anger. Indeed the rabble's path was clearly indicated by the torches which lighted it ; and these shone as giant fireflies, glowing both upon the hillside and in the valley. Ulusia had seen nothing more picturesque since she came to Rabka. The spectacle fascinated her ; she could not quit it.

" Why are you afraid of these people, Claudine ? " she asked her maid presently, " you know that they will not come here."

" Do not say it, madame. They have promised to burn the Castle because their leader has been sent to Cracow."

" Who told you this ? "

" Herr Albert, the second sergeant of police. The Captain is dead, madame. The people killed him."

" When was the man sent away ? "

" I cannot tell you, madame. The sergeant has gone down to the gate to find the Count of Trieste. He says that we must all leave the house immediately."

" Do not listen to such nonsense. We have nothing to fear ; please go down and find out if Count Rudolph has returned."

The trembling maid went off to do her bidding but Ulusia remained by the window. Was it possible that Jura had been sent to Cracow after all ? And did the people think that this was her work ?

Oh, she would never suffer that. She perceived that the hour had come to justify herself. She must tell these madmen the truth—face them unflinchingly—she, who stood in the great Philip's house and was the last of the von Erlachs.

It was a courageous purpose and it pleased her. When the maid returned she discovered her mistress quietly dressing before the mirror and entirely unmoved. To her feverish outburst Ulusia answered in monosyllables. Sergeant Albert had returned. There was dreadful news—everyone must leave the Castle immediately. The Count himself had escaped the fury of the mob by riding for his life toward Cracow. He would have been killed but for the sabres of the police—he would certainly have perished had he attempted to return to the house.

“Oh, madame, madame,” sobbed the terrified woman, “it is you they seek, it is you they threaten—you who have never done any one any harm in all your life.”

Ulusia might have reflected at any other time upon the dishonesty of this gratuitous testimonial, but she was pleased with the girl's candour, and telling her not to be silly or to believe everything the soldiers told her, she went downstairs to learn the truth for herself.

Here she found pandemonium awaiting her. The agitated Baroness had fainted after the fashion of the conventions and was at that very moment being fanned by the awkward hands of the steward,

Franz. A young lieutenant of police, who had come up from the terrace at the risk of his life, gabbled incoherent instructions to the sergeant. Beyond these stood the establishment, cooks, maids, scullions, footmen as white faced a company as ever the great hall of Rabka had known. And Ulusia, wearing that superb gown which Vienna had sent, came among them as a Queen—for such was their subsequent admission.

It was a striking picture—the open door of the great crimson dining-room; the table shining beneath its burden of historic silver; the hall itself with the ancient paintings and the gorgeous Italian ceiling—and beneath its dome this affrighted company. Verily had Ulusia need of her courage—for what consolation might be spoken with justice; what fair answer could she give to them?

"You have come from the Count, lieutenant?" she asked, turning to the soldier.

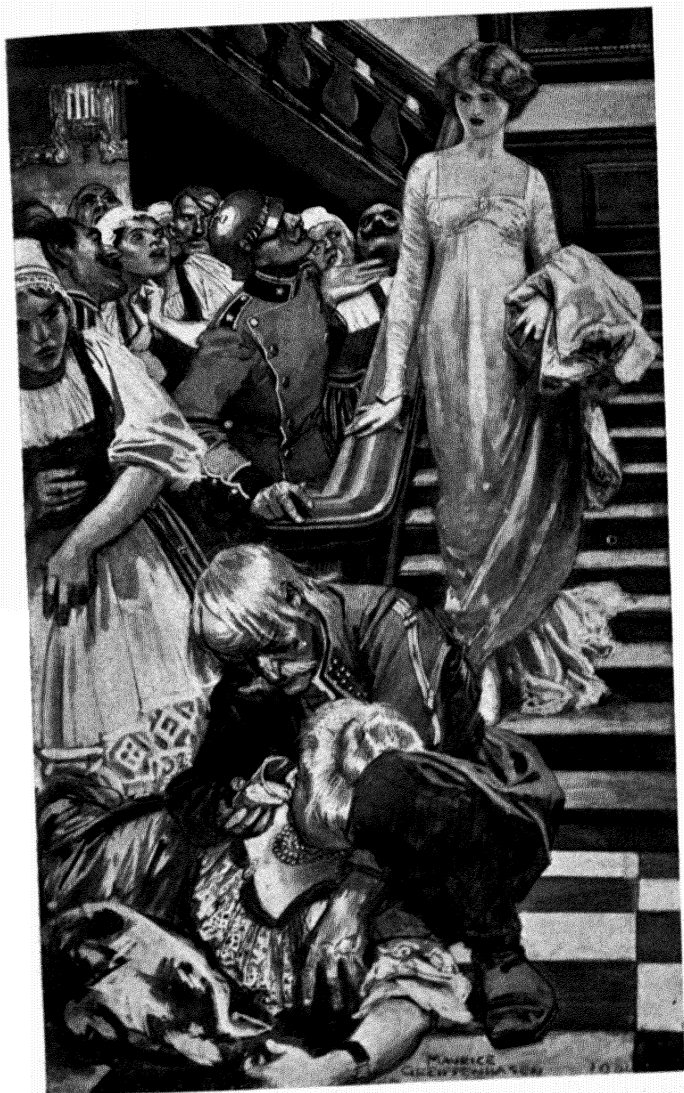
He told her that it was so.

"I forced my horse through the press, Excellency—there were shots fired but I am among the lucky ones. The lord Count has ridden to Cracow—there should be cavalry here before the morning—he may overtake the troop which is returning. I pray to God that it may be so, Countess."

"Do you think that we are in danger, then?"

"I think there will not be a stone of this house remaining to-morrow if the soldiers do not come, Excellency."

"Then what do you wish me to do?"



"Do you think that we are in danger then?"

"To leave at once by the mountain road—the stables are guarded and we can get the carriages out—if you go immediately, Excellency."

"It shall be as you wish, lieutenant. Conduct Her Excellency to the carriage. The servants will go at once—they have my permission. You will see to it, lieutenant."

"But you, yourself, Excellency!"

"I will tell you when I am ready."

He understood her to mean that she would accompany the others and was far too concerned for them all to understand her truly. As for the servants—they might have been released from some dreadful prison house—so wild was their joy. It was each for himself and the devil take the hindmost—and they trooped out together, laughing or crying with joy as the mood took them. When they were gone, the Baroness also consented to be led from the hall—she was both blind and deaf with her ears and incapable of knowing who went and who remained. Ah, dear God, that one had left the civilization of Vienna to come among these savages!

Ulusia waited patiently until all but Franz, the steward, were gone—and then she surprised him by a commonplace confession.

"I am very hungry, Herr Franz," she said, "do you think I could have some dinner?"

He looked at her with astonished eyes, saying surely this was the great Philip's daughter; and without another word he led the way to the dining-

room and began to serve the dinner. For that matter the raging wolves without had settled down to their work in grimmer fashion now; and for the moment their howls were stilled. From time to time, it is true, a savage roar went up, but when it passed, a stillness as of the ultimate night prevailed, and you could hear the very fires crackling in the vast grates of Castle Rabka.

"At what time are the cavalry expected, Herr Franz?" she asked after a little interval of waiting.

The steward rejoined with new hope of her departure—

"By midnight if the messengers overtake them. We do not know if that is possible, Excellency. It will be dawn otherwise."

"Are all the gates locked, Herr Franz?"

"They are all locked, Excellency. My father has seen to that."

"Is your father here, then?"

"He is below at this moment, Excellency."

"Cannot he tell us anything of what the men are doing, Herr Franz?"

"I will summon him if your Excellency wishes."

She rejoined, "Immediately," and he left her to bring in the old man. When Martin appeared presently, one might have said that this night's work had given him back his lost youth. To Ulusia he paid particular homage, regarding her very curiously and speaking as though the three in that room were in possession of a secret of which Rabka was ignorant.

" You sent for me, Excellency."

" Certainly—are you not the last of my establishment who remains faithful ? "

" The last, Excellency, but I shall count for more than one to-night."

" They say that the tower has given up its prisoner—when would that have been, Herr Martin ? "

The old man drew near to the table and bent to whisper, as though the confession moved him to awe.

" He tore the bar asunder as boughs are bent. He has gone to the mountains, Excellency—but he will return. We know that he will return."

" Then you know the man's story, Herr Martin ! "

He opened his eyes wide at this. •

" Who does not remember the proverb ? I would name him among a thousand ? "

" You would name him—is he not the boatman whom they call Jura the Wise ? "

The old man shook his head.

" I have waited for this twenty years, Excellency, but my heart is glad because of it. The people will know it when the time comes and then—— "

" Oh," she said, rising as a crashing sound of heavy blows upon a door made her pulses leap, " assuredly I have come to a house of fools. Why do you not open to my people, Herr Martin ? Are they not waiting for me ? "

He uttered a cry of amazement.

" They are mad, mad," he exclaimed, " but the hour will pass—and then will be the time to speak reason."

"No—the time is now, Martin. I am going to them—I will hear what they want with me."

She crossed the hall, the two men powerless to forbid, and opening a pair of French windows, stepped out upon a balcony above the great doorway which is Rabka's boast. The sudden flashing of the light from the blackness stilled the mob for an instant—then it recognized by what means light had come and with a roar as of a mountain split asunder it belched its accusation.

"Death to the woman—death to her."

Ulusia heard the words very clearly but she did not flinch from them. A voice, prevailing above the uproar, whispered in her ear the traditions of her house and of the great Philip's name. Perhaps her situation helped her. She seemed to stand so far above these people—not only in station but in the tourney of reason and justice.

Looking down to the terraces below, she beheld the rabble pressing hither and thither but had no idea that they were set upon a purpose. Let them rage then to their hearts' content—was not every gate barred? So she said at the beginning, imploring them with outstretched hands to hear her.

Their anger she despised; their threats she mocked. What wrong had she done to them—what reparation had she to make?

Now, this was the beginning of it; but anon a change befel. Old Martin was the first to observe the truth, but to his cry was joined immediately that of his son Franz. The miners, these madmen

from the depths, had fired the stables, and the flames leaped already to the lower stories of the western wing. Oh, you could see the mountains shaping just as though the day had come ; the snow shone as a molten field and every tree dripped jewels of radiance. Let there be talk of bolt and bar, what availed it now ! The faces of the terror-stricken men confessed the peril of their situation. They trembled as frightened children—they implored their mistress to make an end of it.

“ Excellency, Excellency, do you not see what they have done ? ”

“ I see it perfectly, Herr Franz. The stables are on fire. Well, some one must be punished for this.”

“ But the chapel is burning, Excellency. We shall perish here ! ”

“ Go, go, my friends,” she cried, “ go, for Heaven’s sake.”

They knew not how to answer her. Mocking laughter from the mob below awakened new impulses of anger but did not convince her of peril. And yet the builders of a thousand years ago were no match for those who brought naphtha to their task and blasted the giant walls with dynamite. Nay, the mine helped the enemies of those who owned the mine. Huge ruffians, black with their labours surged upward to the day to say that Rabka’s castle should come down. The air seethed with flame of burning spirit. The whole earth quaked when the dynamite was fired.

Now, this was a fearful hour and of all who lived through it none lifted a prouder head than Ulusia von Erlach.

The very terror of the spectacle fascinated her—nor could she yet imagine its possible sequel. Girt about by seething flame, the Castle now stood up amid the mountains as a monument to the centuries, proud, defiant, impregnable. Crashing explosions tore the walls of the outbuildings asunder ; calcined stones were hurled upward as shells from a mortar ; there were rivers and lakes of flame, running hither and thither and scaring even the howling madmen who had kindled them. But the great building itself—surely that would outlive the night. Ulusia for one believed it to be so. It seemed to her childish imagination a great thing to stand here as the queen of this fiery sea, unharmed by it, proud above it, even, it might be, powerful to quell it by a miracle. The men were wiser. They knew that doom was closing about them.

“ Excellency, do you wish that we should perish ? ”

She waved them from her, with a hand whose jewels gave back the radiance of fire.

“ Have I not told you to go,” she cried, “ why do you not obey me ? ”

The steward Franz would have answered this with some attempt at honest argument, but the old man drew him aside and spoke to his mistress.

“ We wait in vain, Excellency,” he said, “ the hour has not yet come. I beseech you to hear us.”

"Of what hour are you speaking, Herr Martin?"

"Of the hour when he shall return, Excellency."

"Oh, a fable, a fable. Why do not these people hear me? Have I not the right of the guilty, if they believe me that? What madness has come upon them?"

"The oppression of years, Excellency, demanding judgment. The hour will repay them for all they have suffered. They will hear reason—but justice will have passed them by."

"Then let justice find its champion—I shall perish with Rabka. If it is my fate, very well. You know what the lord Philip would have done."

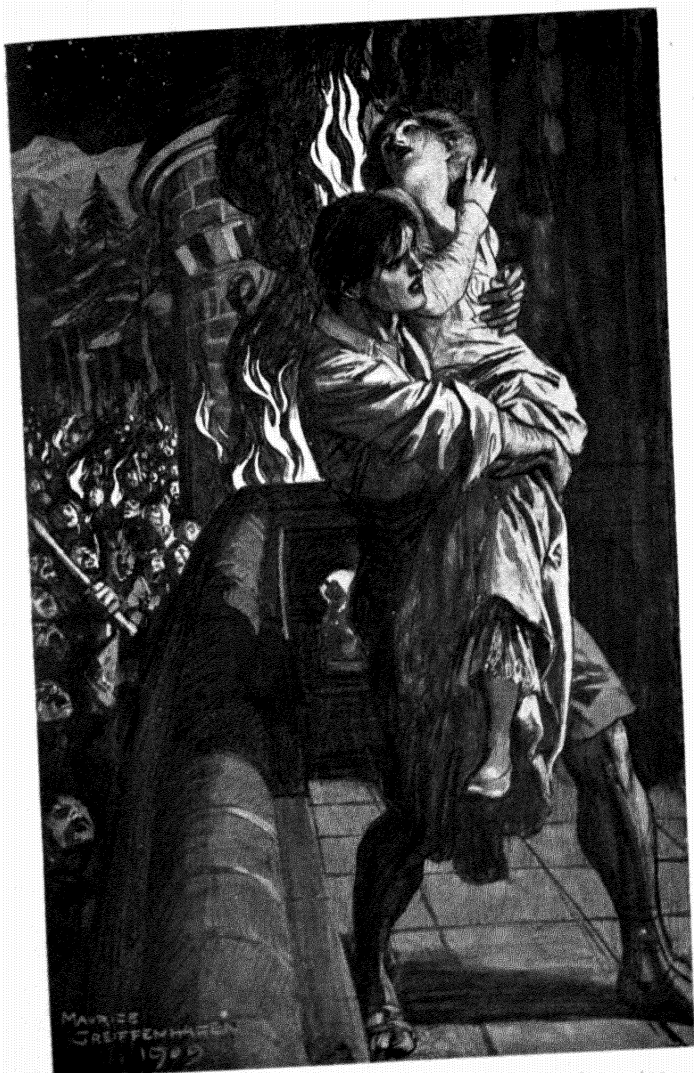
He stammered an assent, praying in his heart that the great walls of the Castle would yet withstand the fire. Ulusia, on the other hand perceived that fire was not the only danger—for pressing through the throng, followed everywhere by the frantic cheers of the multitude, a man came to the threshold of the porch and there cried to those behind him to bring a ladder. Soon the cry went up that this was Jura the Wise, and that he had escaped from his jailors—and upon this there were five hundred hands outstretched to touch if it were but the hem of his garment. But he thrust the people back brutally, and climbing the ladder they set up found himself still fifteen feet from the balcony above. Now he must go up by the pillar's help, climbing as a seaman and kicking the ladder from him while he stretched out iron fingers and touched the balustrade.

He was up now, the people cried. A thousand voices shouted a horrid pæan of victory. They believed that he would throw the woman's body down to them—they waited for the tragedy.

For an instant silence fell as the man dragged himself to the balustrade and climbed it. A wondering people, ready enough to discern a treachery, beheld old Martin, the gate-keeper, flopping on his knees and bowing his head in abject worship; they saw Jura lift the Lady Ulusia in his arms and re-enter the house; they could almost hear the steward Franz imploring his father to quit the scene—and then as though understanding came to them, in a twinkling they uttered such a shout of baffled rage and fury that the very mountains rang with it.

He had betrayed them—their chosen. He was the woman's friend after all. Let the truth be known—let the oath of vengeance be heard above every message of the night. He had betrayed them. Let him perish in the holocaust—for what avenue of escape might be found?

They laughed ferociously and went anew to their task. Such a beacon had not been kindled in Galicia since the Turk was driven out.



"They saw Jura lift the Lady Ulusia in his arms and re-enter the house."

CHAPTER XIII

THE GALLERY OF CAVERNS

ULUSIA opened her eyes to wonder how long she had slept and why her sleep had been so heavy.

For a little while she believed that she was in the great bedroom of Castle Rabka, that melancholy chamber of a hundred stories, draped heavily with the fine stuffs of a hundred years ago and painted by the artist, Wachter, in the style of Giorgione. But when she lifted her eyes and looked to the ceiling above her, she perceived that it was like the ceiling of a tomb, hewn from the cold rock and glimmering with the grey light a cavern had filtered. Then she thought that she must be dreaming and for a little while she lay quite still and closed her eyes again.

What a sleep it had been—what scenes had it not revealed to her. The beginning of these she did not remember very clearly but one scene haunted her by its vivid memories and was not to be banished from her mind.

She had been a prisoner in her own Castle, and while she was a prisoner the people had fired it. Some one, she knew not whom, had carried her

from the burning castle, across a little bridge, below which the fire raged furiously. Oh, she could see it all so clearly—the great keep towering above a sea of flame ; the fiery furnace below ; the bridge itself bursting into flame and men who called to her to hasten. Again and again she heard those maddened shouts as the light woodwork trembled at every footstep and the breath of the flame seemed to be breathed upon their very faces. But they had made a safe transit—and then—— !

It was all confused enough but, despite her effort, she could not disbelieve in it. The cries which had attended her passage to safety, the scorching fire, the black road beyond—had they not been real enough in the hours of sleep ? And the name of the man by whom salvation had been won—that came to her at last as upon a flash. Oh, yes, yes, he had been the boatman whom they called Jura the Wise. Ulusia said it was a wild dream in truth and then she opened her eyes again and looked about her.

Now she lay upon a wooden bed in a circular cave of the eastern galleries of Rabka. Opposite her couch a jagged hole in the rock permitted a vast fire of logs to send its smoke up a natural chimney. A round wooden table stood in the centre of the room and had four ancient chairs, covered in velvet and gold brocade for its ornament. Upon the wall, a clock ticked merrily enough and was faced by a full length portrait of the great lord Philip. But perhaps the richest possession of this strange abode

was a vast Turkey carpet spread upon the floor of rock and glowing with such a wealth of colours as only the East can make tolerable. Upon this the daylight fell dimly from narrow loopholes high up in the side of the cavern. But the room was without tenant and Ulusia had been awake for some few minutes before another entered.

The illusion of dreams passes more swiftly than we think—and this day of awakening was to prove no exception for Ulusia von Erlach. She had but to be quite sure that she slept no longer when the whole truth of yesternight revealed itself and she remembered how she had escaped from the Castle and by whose agency.

The events of the night now presented themselves one by one and were viewed without distortion. She remembered the departure of the Baroness and the servants—the cryptic warnings uttered by old Martin, the dinner she had eaten, the visit to the balcony. And then she saw the strong face of the man Jura as he pressed through the rabble below and climbed to her side.

Oh, yes, he had apprehended the danger—he knew what the people meant and he had saved her from them. She remembered how savagely he had clasped her in his arms and carried her to the mountain gate. She would never forget the pathetic earnestness of his question, when he asked if she were hurt. For who should have hurt her and how? Not until she sat up upon the couch could she understand this—but when she did so she perceived that

her shoulder was swathed in bandages, while the slightest movement gave her pain.

Again she lay and tried to sleep. A little while and she became aware that some one had entered the cavern stealthily and watched her as she lay. Then she discovered the old woman Anna, dressed in a gown of pure white and wearing upon her head a veil in the Greek fashion. Once before, upon a day of Thanksgiving had Ulusia seen this harridan of the people's tales. How greatly had superstition belied her; what a very kindly old woman she seemed after all.

"Is it you, Mother Anna?"

"Yes, yes, Excellency—it is I."

"What has happened to me, mother, why am I here?"

"To save you from the people, Excellency."

"Oh, yes, that I understand—but why do the people wish me harm, mother?"

"You shall ask my son and he will tell you—hark, I hear his step."

She listened with bent ear to some sound which penetrated the rock, while a spasm of fear crept upon her and her hand closed convulsively upon the monstrous oak bludgeon she carried. Ah, if they were discovered here. If the soldiers who were hunting the mountains for Anna's son should come. The dread of that made the old woman's heart quake. The sounds terrified her as an omen.

"That is not my son's step—what then, Excellency? But he will tell us—if they have not taken

him, Excellency—if the people have not killed him.”

“The people, is he not their leader?”

The old woman looked up proudly.

“He was and will be again when the hour comes. He shall tell you, Excellency.”

“Your son, mother?”

The old woman rested upon her staff and looked at the speaker with a cunning face.

“You ask me a question, child. What have they said to you.”

“They have said nothing. But I do not think Jura is your son.”

“He is more to me than any son. And he saved you from the flames last night. Shall I give him a new name, Excellency? Does this fall harshly on your ears? Would you have the priest to baptize him again? Nay, nay, he is my son yet a little while, but when the hour shall come, he will be son to me no longer.”

A quiver shook her frame as she uttered the words; she lifted her eyes as though some vision of past happiness tormented her—then bending her ear quickly, she listened again for a sound of footsteps.

“He is coming, my son—he will tell you, Excellency; he will speak.”

A quick step upon a corridor of stone was plainly audible to them both—and presently Jura stood in the door of the cavern, a rifle in his hand and a bag about his shoulder. Listening a moment as though fearing a possible pursuit, he threw the

bag to the floor presently and cried for Stephen, whereon a half-witted lad emerged from the shadow of the corridor and relieved him of his burdens.

"So Her Excellency is awake, mother. Is all prepared for her?"

"It is prepared, my son."

"Would she wish to see me, Anna Mother?"

"Oh, yes, yes, I wish it," exclaimed Ulusia and he entered the cavern immediately and doffing his cap knelt by her couch and touched her hands with his lips.

"My mother has told you everything, Excellency."

"She has told me little——"

"For a good reason—for what is not known is better untold. Let me make her silence good. They have burned Rabka to the ground—your house is in ashes—we carried you here because of the people. You shall go hence when it is safe. Excellency, there is nothing else to say but you shall tell us much that we would know."

She watched his handsome face for the eyes looked deep into her own and the hand which touched her wrists burned as living coal.

"How came I by this?" she asked—indicating her wounded arm. He answered her with bent head.

"There were those who had rifles in their hands—they stood among the people. So I shielded you with my arms, Excellency—but clumsily. This much you shall forgive. What my mother cannot do, no doctor in Gallicia may make good. It would be death to summon one here—to-day."

"I do not wish it, Jura," she rejoined, calling him by his name for the first time since she had known him—"Oh, I know that I am among friends—I have understood that from the beginning."

A shadow crossed his face.

"Friends who have contrived this," he said, "that your house lies in ashes and the people cry for your death. But they will yet be ashamed—Rabka shall rise again: the people will kneel before you. So much I swear—so much I shall live to accomplish."

She rested silently a little while and then she asked him the question she had just put to his mother.

"You have another name," she said, "you have not always been called Jura the Wise."

"In my childhood," he said quite simply, "they called me Philip."

"The name of my uncle——"

"In honour of his name. Then came the day when the Monk Arthur, whose pupil I was, wished it otherwise. He named me Jura—I have been so called ever since."

She thought upon it musingly, but would not pursue the point. Her next question was commonplace. Where was this place—how had they fled to such a shelter? He told her in short crisp phrases—the words of a man given to deeds but not to speech. .

"This is one of the caverns of the eastern gallery. It lies beyond the ken of police and people. They

say my mother and I alone have the key to it. I brought you here until the people shall recover their reason and understand what they have done, I do not know when that day will be."

"But the soldiers who were to come from Cracow."

He smiled.

"There is a squadron of cavalry about the ashes of your home—another patrols the mountains. If they discover the road to the eastern gallery then my duty is done and you shall go with them. I cannot say if that will be. You need all my mother's skill for many days yet, Excellency, Let that be sufficient."

She did not remonstrate but begged him to tell her of yesternight and the flight. By what road had they escaped—how had he found his way to this place? This loosed his tongue and he narrated the story in the simple words of a man who knew neither vanity nor humiliation.

"My mother sent the lad Stephen to the tower. I forced the bars and climbed down to him. He showed me the place on the mountains where the old shaft leads down to the gallery of caverns and there he waited for me. Your servants were my guides thereto—I left them on the hillside whence they would cross the valley to Cracow to-day. But the lad brought us hither where my mother waited. A hundred years ago the mad Count Robert, your great grandfather, built these apartments that he might hide from the world. They were forgotten a hundred years but known to the great Philip—

and to my mother. To her we owe salvation—let that not be forgotten when the hour comes.”

He stood up now and taking the old woman in his arms he kissed her on both cheeks, very tenderly as a true son who understood.

“Her Excellency has need of you, mother,” he said—“let me not intrude. I go to see what the soldiers are doing—but fear nothing. There is no foot in Gallicia which shall track me in the caverns. You know there is not, Anna Mother.”

She bent her head and kissed his hand—the act of one who worshipped rather than of one who loved—and he strode away his step ringing through the caverns as though by its boldness to give her confidence. Anna, herself going to the fire began to stir a mess which cooked thereon and brought it presently to Ulusia’s side.

“Here is that which no doctor may better,” she said in a proud voice, “drink, my child, and let me call you ‘daughter.’”

CHAPTER XIV

THE GIRL MATHILDE

MATHILDE entered the cavern upon tiptoe and peered at the couch whereon Ulusia lay. This would have been about four of the afternoon when the last rays of the wan light had given place to shadows and the glimmer of the ebbing fire alone illumined that weird retreat.

She was a tall and shapely girl, black haired and wild—feet naked, her eyes afire, her bosom bared. Met upon the road-side, she would have been named for an Egyptian—but here she was serving maid to Mother Anna—and she had come up from the lower galleries to tell her story.

“Is it you, Anna Mother?”

She crept forward, looking alternately to the bed and the great chair by the chimney. When she perceived that the old woman was no longer in the room, she advanced boldly to Ulusia's side and knelt there as one contemplating speech but afraid.

“Who are you, girl?”

“I am Mathilde, Excellency, servant to Mother Anna.”

“How is it that I have not seen you before?”

“I have been to the Black Gallery, Excellency, where we used to live. The soldiers are there now; we shall not go there any more.”

"Have you come to tell Mother Anna this?"

"Yes, Excellency—and to ask how you do?"

"I am better, Mathilde—Mother Anna is so clever—I shall not be here very long."

"They think you dead, Excellency. They are saying in the mine that you perished with Herr Jura in the house. I heard them as I lay hidden. They will never seek you here, Excellency."

"Then I shall go to them to-morrow, Mathilde."

The girl stared in wild affright.

"If Herr Jura is taken, they will shoot him, Excellency—it is safe for you to go, but for him it is death. Will you not remember that—for pity's sake."

Her eyes flashed with the words, her bosom heaved. Uluſia thought her a majestic figure of distress—but her very alarm betrayed her.

"Why do you speak to me like this, Mathilde—what is Herr Jura to you then?"

Mathilde cast down her eyes and plucked with trembling fingers at the bare stone floor.

"He is the man I love, Excellency."

"And loving him, you fear that I shall harm him."

"Yes, yes, because you do not know the truth. When you go from us, Excellency, will you not say that Jura is dead?"

"If I go, Mathilde! Would it not then be better for him that I stay?"

Mathilde half-closed her eyes as though she were dreaming.

"Your friends seek you—you must go to them, Excellency—when it is safe. I will lead you; I will say that you were with me. If it could be soon, then I think it would be better for Herr Jura's safety. But you will know; you are wise and you will know."

Ulusia thought upon it a little while and then she asked a question.

"Is not Herr Jura the son of Mother Anna?"

"You know that he is not, Excellency."

It was said in such simple good faith that Ulusia knew not how to receive it.

"I know—indeed I know nothing but what they tell me. Whose son is he then?"

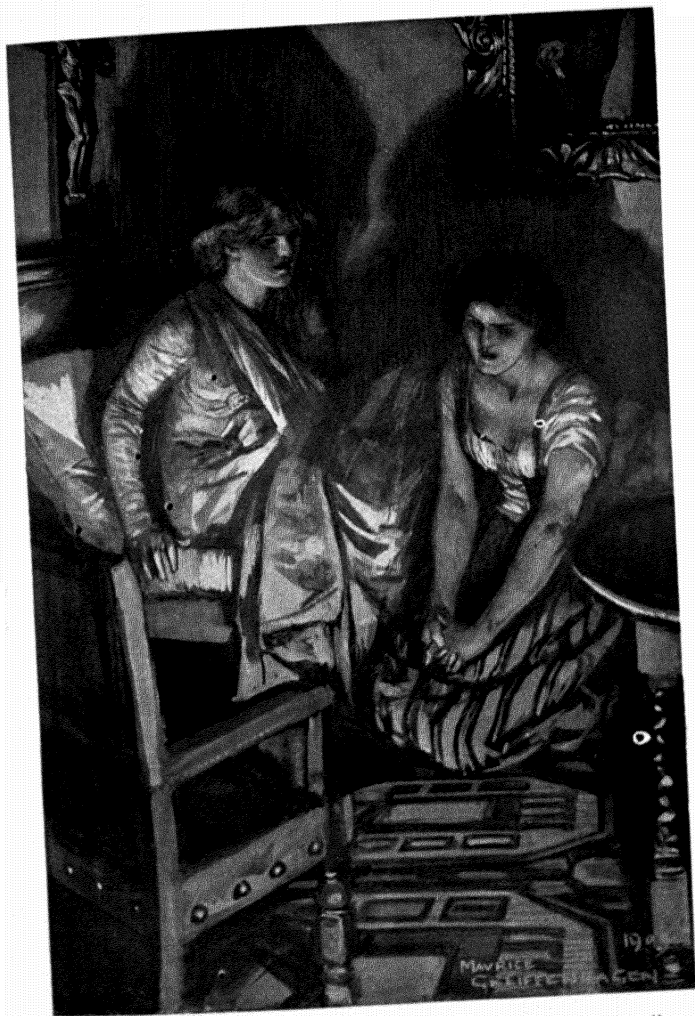
Mathilde crouched upon the floor and answered almost as one who muttered her thought rather than addressed another.

"They say that he is the son of the dead lord Philip. The child died and was buried in the chapel of Rabka, but the child has come to life again and will be the master of the people. Oh, it is a fable and yet the people have such faith. He is dead but risen and he will lead them. Look at Herr Jura's face and it is to answer all the questions—the dead lord Philip who died because they took his son from him. That is what they say in the mine, Excellency."

"And you, who know him, believe it, Mathilde?"

"I believe it, Excellency—it is more to me than the faith of the priests."

"You believe it because you love him?"



"They say that he is the son of the dead Lord Philip."

White Walls]

[Page 116

"Yes, yes, because I love him, Excellency."

She looked her questioner full in the face, not ashamed now but flushing with the pride of confession. This was her attitude when Mother Anna entered the cavern to discover her and bring her to her feet with a harsh rebuke.

Mathilde, shrinking from the words, buried her face in her hands and fled from the place. Outcast, drudge, believing herself to be without a friend in the world, she could still believe that God owed her some signal recompense which, but for yesternight, she might be about to win. Who was this strange woman to come thus upon the path of her happiness and to destroy it? Those vain dreams of her sleep, by what justice were they dispelled? Anger uncontrollable seized upon her as she reflected upon all that must happen when the truth were known, and the son of Philip reigned at Rabka. Mother Anna, meanwhile, had seated herself by Ulusia's bed and watched her closely. What had the girl said, what truth had she spoken?

"Do not heed Mathilde, my child—she is one of the dreamers. What said she then—what child's tale has she been telling?"

"She spoke of Jura, mother—she believes that he is Count Philip's son."

The old woman betrayed no anger.

"Was that hidden from you, then, Excellency?"

"I did not think of it, mother—if it is so, he is my kinsman. Why, then, has he kept it from the world?"

"Because, my child, the world would not hear him."

"You mean, mother, that there are no proofs of this?"

"There are proofs, child, but the man in whose keeping they lay has been dead these three years. The Count, our master, banished him from Rabka because he feared the fables. Think you that otherwise the lord Philip's son would wear the robes of bondage? We cannot prove what we know to be. The tomb stands between the living and the dead."

"But it shall stand no longer, mother. Oh, surely justice must be done."

Mother Anna shook her head.

"If it lay with thee, child! You know not of what you speak. None the less I believe it to be his destiny. The day will come and the world will know and he will go forth to reign—my son who has yet to see the cities of the world and to learn to live."

She rose up as though unwilling to speak of it again. From without the cavern there came a low sound of knocking—and anon Jura entered with a swift foot.

"The soldiers are driving the people from the old workings," he said quietly. "If Her Excellency wishes it, I will tell them that she is here."

Ulusia answered without a moment's hesitation.

"I do not wish it, Jura—I will stay with Mother Anna."

CHAPTER XV

THE JOURNEY TO STREPITZA

THE carriage was to be on the Strepitza Road at half-past five o'clock, time enough, Mother Anna said, to make the journey to the Bishop's palace and to find the excellent Heinrich at his prayers or his dinner as the chance of it should decide.

Ulusia cared little how it might be. She wondered that this hour of her deliverance found her so indifferent. She was to return to the world which believed that she had perished and to know Rabka no more. Never again, it might be, would she visit this wonderland of the subterranean kingdom or suffer the spell of it to enchant her. The romance and tragedy of the few brief days spent as Mother Anna's guest were over.

Jura has been the instrument of this, nor would he suffer an alternative. The first day had carried to the palace the news that she lived and that the mine harboured her. She was hurt but not seriously, the messenger had been commanded to say. A few days would see her in her uncle's house when she would tell him of all that had befallen her. Hereafter they were hours of reckoning and of

subterfuge. She had no courage to tell herself why she lingered.

Her wound has been superficial and healed quickly to Mother Anna's touch. There had been no more talk of the lord Philip's son except upon that fateful night. Day by day, as very fugitives from justice, the man and the girl went forth to see her heritage and to view the realms of darkness as though they were the gardens of the earth. To her questions about his past and the life which must have been the living death, he answered vaguely, that his imagination had been his world and had not tricked him—but the memory of the Sun God was ever with him, and now that the oath had been broken he would go every day to a high place of the gallery and worship as any pagan at a shrine of fire. Hither Ulusia followed him on the morning of the fourth day and here she watched him at his orisons.

They stood upon a high place in the great hollow of the mountains, in a gallery of nature's building poised above a gaunt ravine where raced a river that defied the frosts. Above them were a hundred angry pinnacles of the jagged rock; vast walls of weather-worn salt; the frozen steeps of snow-bound summits: the towers of nature's solemn temple. Inexpressibly grand, remote from all Rabka's life, a haven of eternal twilight in its depths—here Jura would behold the rising sun and kneel in awe and reverence. To the child's rebuke he answered simply, "I have found the emblem of my god," and superstition did not dictate the act or ignorance;

the faith taught him by the Monk Arthur lost nothing by this pagan worship.

"My dreams have shown me many things, but this never," he said, "what the pictures and a child's memory could teach me of the world, that I learned from the priest. But who shall tell of the glory of the day? What pen shall write the truths of even one beam which falls from yonder sun upon the eyes of him who sees for the first time?"

She had surprised Jura in many moods, but never in such a mood as this. The day, she thought, robbed him of his manhood. Down there amid the caverns he was king indeed, but here in the sunlight he stood as a little child to worship.

"I will send for you to Vienna," she said in comment, "I will show you the cities, Jura. Oh, I can understand what your life has been—I know—I *know*—but now, are you not free now? Will you be the prisoner of this place any more?"

"You ask me what I cannot tell you, Excellency—for what are the cities to me and who will guide me thither? Is not my home Rabka—have not I my duties among the people? For you it is otherwise. You will go to Vienna and reign there. It is your destiny. You will marry and have children—such must be your part. But my place is here—I have my work to do."

"None the less, you will come to Vienna," she said, "I have dreamed of that so many nights since first I saw you. At Vienna we shall meet again, Jura."

He turned and looked at her, searching her eyes and watching the roseate flecks upon the cheeks which betrayed her. He knew—this son of Rabka's darkness knew, but of that his wisdom did not dare to speak, and he hastened to talk of other things as though afraid of the vision he himself had conjured up.

"You will not return to this place," he said, "it is not fit that you should do so. For me it is different. I have no place in the cities—I do not even know their tongue. What men call education is chiefly the knowledge of their fellow men. I have none of it. The experience they call pleasure is unknown to me. When the madness has passed I shall go back to my boats unless my destiny call me elsewhere. Sometimes I feel that this must be. I am afraid of your world—I long for it but am afraid."

"But I will give you courage, Jura—I will teach you. Oh, if you knew how different you are from any man I have met. To meet you is to step out of the world we live in and to go back five hundred years. When you come to Vienna, I will be your teacher: will you not learn with me?"

He smiled sadly.

"At Vienna," he said, "you would be ashamed to say that Jura the Wise was known to you."

She protested that it could not be, but unavailingly. He adhered firmly to the belief that his youth had made such association impossible. A desire to avoid the topic and to divert her thoughts led him to propose that she should see something

of the eastern galleries before she left ; and to this she assented readily.

"We may meet soldiers," he said, "but I think not. However it be, that is a day which will not long be postponed. I do not fear it. The madness has passed and my people judge me soberly. There will be no soldiers at Rabka on the day that you leave us. Beware of those who counsel you to return."

"Then your people desire that the Count of Trieste shall be their master, Jura ? "

"It is not in the people's mind to name a master at all. He will govern us while it is appointed—but according to the laws. You will have your fine house in Vienna and remember this place with disfavour if you remember it at all. That is human nature. You are a child and your life is before you. Better that it should be lived in the sunshine than in such a place as this."

He would hear no argument to the contrary—and as though to emphasize his words he led her through a winding passage of the rock down to the black gallery and the nether world. Here he had lived so many years. This haunted labyrinth had been the home of his security. He showed her many a cavern where the bones of men and women marked ancient tragedies of the darker years ; he was her guide through treacherous caves, black as the heart of Erebus and unspeakable in their suggestion of hidden phantom terrors ; with him she passed safely by the brink of many a hidden chasm ; through great vaulted apartments, any one of which

would have harboured a mighty cathedral. And at last as it were by some secret way to which years had given the key, he brought her to a loop-hole of the rock whence she could look over the waters of the lake and see the home in which his later years were lived.

"Fourteen years," he said, "I lived with the Monk Arthur in yonder house. All that I know he taught me. With him I went hunting where neither soldier nor police would go. There was no evil of this place into whose face he would not look—no leper he spurned. We lived such a life as the books name savage—we had guns in our hands and hunted the galleries for such game as comes in winter-time from the hills above. Once every year we went up to the cathedral for Thanksgiving—but our chapel was hewn out of yonder rock and therein we worshipped. Sometimes he has taken me to the streets and cafés and shown me what the pleasures of men may be. At other times he has fled with me to the eastern gallery and lain hidden many a week. "The day would come," he said—"but here was a prophet whom they banished and who will return to Rabka no more."

"How did you hear of his death, Jura?"

"There is nothing done above of which the mine does not hear. We have your newspapers from Vienna; we read your books. The monk died upon an island of the Adriatic and the Count sent the news down to us. I mourned a year, for this man was a father to me."

"And you still regard that house as a home?"

"If it is so ordained I will live there until the end of my days."

* * * *

They returned to Mother Anna at an early hour and thereafter all the talk was of departure.

Ulusia would go to her uncle's house and there the truth must be told. Whatever the Count might have planned, she had the will and she believed the power to circumvent it. Let the soldiers arrest the man who had saved her life and she would venture her own life to save him. Upon so much she was determined.

What a romance it had been, what a story of wonder and of tragedy. Naturally she perceived that it was no story of yesterday, but of wrongs long suffered and finding in her advent this dramatic expression. The people had no grievance against her; reflection had taught them so much already—but the régime at Rabka, the monotonous labour, the darkness, the tyranny they had suffered at the Count's hands, contrived this revolution of an hour and justified it. She, Ulusia, had been but the scape-goat. A man's cleverness put the burden upon her shoulders.

Henceforth all this must be changed. She knew not how or why, but was going back to the world with brave resolutions. A few weeks had transformed her; she was the little schoolgirl no longer but a woman who had looked deep into the heart of human misery and had shed bitter tears because of it.

Alone she could do nothing—so much she knew well, but with a strong man's help, ah, what could she not then accomplish !

“ I shall go to Strepitza to-morrow and my uncle will hear the truth,” she said to Mother Anna at the moment of farewell ; “ if you will not help me I shall ask General Wagner, who was so kind to me in Vienna, to speak for me and see that justice is done. Send to me at my uncle's house should any danger threaten you. And never forget that your son has saved my life.”

Here was the bond between them—Jura had saved her life and his own might be in jeopardy thereby. Down there in the cavern they knew nothing of what the world was saying above ; of the story of the Rabka emeute as the papers had told it ; of her reported death and the account given of the rebel ringleader and of the outrage of his presence in the Castle. The messages they had sent by trusty confederates had been received with scorn. None believed that Count Feodor's daughter had survived the night of tragedy. Rudolph of Trieste had applied already to the Courts to be established in his governorship.

And upon this Ulusia went forth, almost openly, Jura accompanying her to the carriage which waited upon the mountain road and the old woman kneeling to receive her blessing. Never would the mistress of Rabka forget that night, the moon shining upon the mountain, the distant view of the town across the plain, the wide starlit heaven, the magnificent

figure of him who had been called the lord Philip's son.

"You will come when I send for you," she said, as he stooped and kissed her hand.

"Yes," he said, "if you send I will come."

"To my house in Vienna where I will show you the cities."

"If Rabka is in your thoughts when this night is forgotten, let your messenger come to the house upon the island. There I will await him."

"It will not be many days," she said quietly—and then: "God keep you, Jura, and give you strength."

He gave an order to the coachman—for this was a carriage sent by old Martin the gate-keeper—and the man touched his horses and put them to a gentle trot down the steep path leading to the valley. Long Jura watched the carriage as the moonlight showed it to him against the curtain of the driven snow and its lamps illumined the mists in the hollows. It had been lost to his sight for more than an hour when, awaking as from a reverie, he turned about and climbed the steep which led to the cavern's mouth.

Now and henceforth Rabka's darkness had lost its spell. He feared the labyrinth as one who knew that therein the end of all his dreams might be at hand.

CHAPTER XVI

BETRAYAL

HE struck across the mountain and re-entered the cavern by an ancient shaft whose ladder of iron was rusted almost to the core and whose depth stood for one of Rabka's fables. But Jura the Wise had never known fear of the mine. No chamois had a surer touch upon niche or crevice nor went more boldly in the darkness.

He climbed down the ladder a hundred feet and, searching for an opening with his feet, touched an orifice in the face of the rock through which he crept to an ancient engine-room beyond—a sepulchre whose ghosts were rusted and long become but oxides of their once proud iron. Hence his way lay still downwards upon a winding stairway, cut out from the sheer rock—at the foot of which he gained an outer cave and was astonished that a lantern's glimmer spoke of habitation. This astonishment was not less when a voice addressed him from the shadows and he discovered that the girl Mathilde waited for him and that ~~she~~ she had carried the lantern.

"Mathilde," he cried—she did not answer him; and then again, "Mathilde, what do you do here." A sob was the rejoinder; she lay crouching on the ground at his feet and he lifted her and raised the lantern that he might see her face.

"What is it, Mathilde—who has done you harm—has Mother Anna——"

"No, no," she cried passionately, "no harm has been done. It is for you, Jura—the soldiers are seeking for you—they are coming here—oh, for God's sake, Jura."

He knew not what to make of it. Her fear, her distress, but above these her passionate desire for his safety were new emotions with which he had been unfamiliar hitherto. As in a flash this girl's love for him was revealed, and it set him trembling, he knew not why.

"What do you mean—there is no trooper in all Rabka who has the key to such a road as this—what do you mean, Mathilde?"

She clasped him about the neck and whispered her fevered words almost in his ear. It was as though she lived through years of her passion in that exquisite moment of his embrace. To lie in his arms, to look into his eyes—and yet to know. Oh, that were the heaven and the hell of a single instant.

"The mother sent me to the house upon the lake for wine and bread—you know that it has been left there for us every day. I took my boat and rowed across and the Herr Lieutenant Albert was there when I would have landed, but I made a good excuse to him and went away. Then I saw there were soldiers in Silver Creek and I went up by the rocks and lay hid to listen. They know where we have gone, Jura—some one has betrayed us; they are coming here this night. That is what I

heard—that is the news I bring, and oh, for God's sake hearken—there is time, Jura—hear me and go back—I will follow you—I will be your servant if you will, but go—away from this place, Jura, away from the soldiers.”

Her arms were locked about his neck, her bosom heaved, she pressed her lips up to his as though all sense of shame were long forgotten and by this one supreme caress she would win him. The man on his part read the truth and, shaking himself free, he accused her.

“You are lying to me, Mathilde—it was you who betrayed us.”

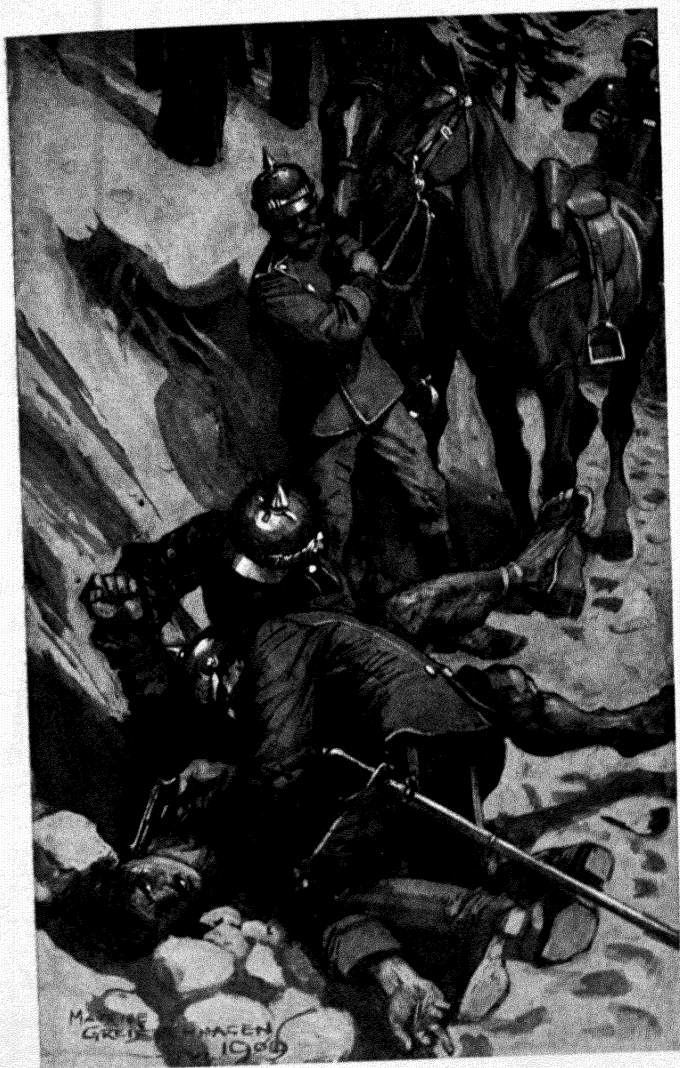
“Jura, Jura, will you kill me with your words? I swear to you on the Holy Cross——”

“I will not hear you—why do you come to me with this lie—it is you who have done this—there is not another in all Rabka who could have led them to this place. Think you that I am deceived, Mathilde? You shall never be the servant to my mother again—I will see to it.”

Her face hardened, her tears were dried up at this.

“Oh,” she said, “the drudge shall lie on the kitchen stones no longer—the crust shall be denied to her. Let the shame be to you and yours who have so treated me. All the mine knows what I have suffered. Are there not twenty houses open to me—but because of you, because you were her son——”

She fell upon her knees and burst into an agony of weeping. He knew nothing of the justice of her words, of woman's inhumanity to woman or the



"The troopers had laid iron hands upon him."

White Walls]

[Page 130.

story of her servitude. And this was to be forgiven him, for he understood that his hour had come and that this night he must answer for what had been done at Rabka's Castle.

Should he save himself, or, throwing down the gauntlet, know the worst that could befall him? There would be a trial, he imagined, and the story of the revolt must be told to the judges. Understanding but little of the lawyers' jargon or of any talk about incitement and persuasion, his untrained logic would have it that he could not be convicted because of what the people had done. Perhaps the prophet's wisdom helped him to decide. How strange that all this had befallen so soon after Ulusia had come to Rabka. To be sure Rudolph had planned much of it, but not the final cataclysm. Did not the fables speak of an appointed hour "when another should reign where the lord Philip had ruled?" He thought upon this as he went down to the cavern. It could not be coincidence.

Mother Anna sat crouching by the fire as he entered and did not hear his approach. He touched her upon the shoulder and she started up fearfully as though the hand of justice had been laid upon her.

"Is it you, Jura—I feared the soldiers. There have been footsteps beyond the gallery this hour and more. Where is the girl Mathilde—have you seen her?"

He was about to say "Yes" when prudence restrained him. In truth that crouching figure he had left, the tears, the pitiful confession, remained a burning memory. Was it possible that

this gentle old woman he had called mother had been mother to him alone. He feared that it might be so ; he would not speak.

"What do you want with the child, Anna Mother ? "

"Let her say where she has been this hour or more—hark, Jura, do you not hear them? I tell you the soldiers are in the gallery. Will you not heed me ? "

She bent her head to listen and he stood immobile while from a distant gallery the sounds of picks were to be heard. Here was a signal neither might disregard. The soldiers had discovered them—they were hewing their way to the cavern.

"What think you, mother—is it appointed that this should be or would you have it otherwise? We can pass out by Three Torrents if you are of the mind."

"No, no," she rejoined—and yet it was plain that the doubt racked her—"the bridge has been down these six months. We cannot pass by there, Jura. What is to be done must be done by the mountains."

She passed talon-like fingers through her dishevelled hair and peered deep into the heart of the fire. Perchance she sought a revelation of the mystery in the flames. All her life's work had been thrown to the scale in this hour—she had the wit to see that a vulgar tragedy might crown it and that he whom she had called "son" might yet be hanged from the ruined ramparts of the Castle.

"You cannot go," she cried, and then with a

bitter oath—"the black death be upon her who has betrayed us. Shall I tell them that you are the lord Philip's son? What will it avail us? The proofs lie buried where the monk sleeps. They will cry upon you for a madman. No, no, I will not speak—but you, Jura, must know. Twenty years ago you were sent to my keeping that Feodor might reign. The lord Philip lost his reason when your mother died—thereafter his brother would have killed you. But the monk brought you here and my duty is done. Tell them who you are and let the world judge. I say that the hour has come and the day is at hand."

Jura did not move while she spoke. Some of these truths had been the hope of his years, but the whole truth he had never known. Even now he feared it, did not dare to give it a place in his mind and was over ready to believe it a mad woman's mockery. The lord Philip's son—had they not promised him great destiny, a lord's dignity, the right and title to be Rabka's prince!

And all this upon the word of a monk who had been in his grave these three years. Oh, vain dream! What had it to do with him?

"I shall tell the soldiers nothing, mother," he exclaimed anon—"if the truth be as you say, my need is liberty. Think you that any trooper will trap me in Rabka? I will teach them a lesson, while you——"

"Go, go," she cried rising of a sudden and raising clenched fists above her head, "they are in the gallery, they are here."

He turned to listen and could hear the footsteps very distinctly now. The men were creeping up the steep which led from Rabka's river to the cavern, nay, were almost at the very door. The old woman herself, a very picture of a wanton sorceress, though as harmless as any milkmaid in Gallicia, drew closer to the fire as though to warm her frozen fingers by its flames. Jura cast one quick glance at her, seized upon his rifle and passed from the cavern by the way he had entered it. Let them follow him if they would. Some would pay for the venture to-morrow.

He re-entered the cave where he had first met the weeping Mathilde and discovered her still crouching at its doorway. To his command that she should go down to Mother Anna, she answered by clinging to his arms and beseeching him to take her with him.

"I will go with you to the end of the world, Jura," she said, "leave me not here—for God's sake take pity upon me?"

"Upon a woman who has betrayed me."

"That I might win your love, yes, yes, that I might save you from the other woman. What is she to you, Jura? Will she not mock you to-morrow—will they not punish you because she owes her life to you? I sent the soldiers to the gallery; but I am not ashamed, Jura, and you shall thank me yet."

He answered not a word—but thrusting her aside passed up towards the shaft whose ladder should save him. The girl, clever as she was, might have omitted to speak of this. He dared to hope that it would be so, and climbing apace he reached the

orifice at last and sprung out upon the mountain path. Oh, it was good to be here—good to breathe the cold night air ; good to see the distant light of town and railway and to say that over yonder was the road which Ulusia had taken to her uncle's house. That road he had the desire to follow—but he had not taken twenty paces down toward the valley when he perceived a squadron of cavalry riding leisurely upwards—and, turning about, espied another crossing the hills from the south. The girl Mathilde had done her work too well—he knew now that but one haven remained open to him and so perilous that no other in all Gallicia would have dared it. He must climb the great pit known as the Bear's Mouth—must climb to that high ledge by which the mine might be regained and the hope of flight renewed. There was no alternative—that or trial and, it might be, death.

Jura knew the Bear's Mouth because the Monk Arthur had often taken him there—but from the mine and not from the mountain. They visited it stealthily by night in the earlier years and had studied the maps which showed where it lay and how it was to be gained from the mountain road.

"Some day," the monk had said, "you may need any hiding place that Rabka can open to you." And now the hour had come and in that mighty hollow amid the towering peaks the saying should be put to the proof. Jura ran swiftly, believing that he had not been seen—but herein judgment failed him ; for the soldiers were watching keenly

and they detected him upon the road even before he was aware of their presence. Putting their horses to the gallop they descended the defile upon his heels unslung their rifles as he began to climb and were firing at him before he had gained the first of the ridges.

A man is not hit readily by a rifleman upon a moonlit night nor is a rocky gorge a fair footing for a blundering marksman. None the less Jura would not have lived five minutes but for a simple accident which found the troopers firing with blank cartridge instead of ball. Oh, there had been outcry enough at this cursed mine and the Government would have no new outrage upon their hands. So were the cavalry forbidden to load their carbines with ball and so did the fugitive make the first of the ledges and lay there breathless to listen to the dull reports of rifles and to believe that no miracle could save him from them. Something, perhaps, of the truth came to him when a second volley failed to dislodge a single stone from the crag he had climbed; but being willing, however it might be, to dare all in a supreme attempt, he started up anon and began the ascent anew.

And here jade Fortune turned her back upon him—for losing his foothold when a third volley was fired, and the snow giving way suddenly at his touch, he rolled over and over to the defile below and the troopers had laid iron hands upon him almost before he understood that the game was lost.

CHAPTER XVII

ULUSIA HEARS OF THE ENGLISHMAN

COUNT RUDOLPH was very well known to the servants at the Erlach Palace in Vienna, and his comings and goings provoked but little curiosity. Some ten weeks, however, had passed without a visit from him, when on the morning of the third day of May following the cataclysm at Rabka, he presented himself without warning and asked if the Countess were at home.

"She is not at home, Excellency—but we expect her every moment," said the tremendous functionary who ruled over the outer courtyard of that magnificent domain. "Will your Excellency be pleased to wait?"

The Count said that he would do so, and having received the homage of other splendid personages who lolled in angles, as though an erect attitude made life impossible, he ascended to the small drawing-room upon the first floor and there awaited one, whom ironically he named his mistress.

Now this was a pretty room and it gave upon the small Arenberg Park, which, as all the world knows, is one of society's landmarks in the fair city of Vienna. But neither apartment nor park interested the

amiable Rudolph at that moment, and his first swift glance was to the writing table, where some one had been very busy lately as all the evidence went to show. Here a careless pile of correspondence bore witness to a young girl's diligence. The Count examined these letters with scrupulous accuracy, and a pleasant smile illumining his not unhandsome face he returned to the window and took up his station there.

Oh, yes, things were going very well indeed with Rudolph of Trieste and he was by no means dissatisfied. True, his winter's tale had been a sad bungle and the world had said unkind things about a man who began by exasperating his people and then would have set the blame on a child's shoulders. Rudolph remembered how ironical the papers had been and what troublesome questions had been asked in Parliament. But, after all, neither Press nor Parliament interfered overmuch with his comfort—and was he not master of Rabka now beyond any hope of dispute? How much per annum this would mean in good Austrian crowns, the wily Governor did not care to reckon. There would never be talk again of a woman's rule at Rabka—and that was sufficient for him.

He set his hat upon a little table and his gloves he drew off carefully. One of the letters which Ulusia had written continued to trouble him, and this was addressed to an Englishman, the Earl of Amblehurst. Rudolph's spies—and there were a whole troop of them in the Erlach Palace—had made casual

reference to the fellow and named him among the favoured minority which was received tolerantly or even encouraged at the house. Rudolph knew sufficient of Englishmen not to like them—and while he did not care twopence whether this particular Englishman did or did not make love to Ulusia von Erlach, there were other eventualities he contemplated with less confidence.

“They are a pestilent nation,” he said, “and never so happy as when they are managing other people’s affairs. They do you good by fighting you and then leave you to get well upon their medicine. Now, who is this fellow and what the devil is he after, if it is not Ulusia’s money. I must see to it—I must have him watched.”

He made a note of it in his mind and would have added others but for the sudden entry of Ulusia and her exclamation—which might have signified welcome or might have implied annoyance. A sensitive person would have remained in doubt—but Rudolph of Trieste was far from being sensitive and he cared very little how it might be.

She was radiant in a gown of black lace and chiffon and wore a monstrous hat such as Paris was to copy presently—as Paris often does when Vienna sets the fashion. Become more womanly in her carriage and gesture—for her new position had made her that—Rudolph could admit that she was the most beautiful woman in the city, as report already had made her out to be. Upon her right arm she carried the smallest Pomeranian he remem-

bered to have seen. Her left hand was free and the wrist showed a wide band of gold emblazoned in diamonds.

"Oh," she exclaimed with just a suggestion of temper in her tone as she stood in the doorway and watched him; "they did not tell me you were here, Count?"

"Not tell you—but I have been here for half an hour."

"They merely said 'His Excellency'—I thought it would have been——"

She hesitated for the word, but he was at hand with it.

"The Lord Amblehurst, no doubt."

Ulusia raised her eyebrows but did not contradict him. Crossing to the table, she made a pretence of sorting out her letters while she said—"Have you come here from Rabka, Count?"

"From nowhere else, I arrived at one o'clock and lunched at the Jockey Club. Then I drove in the Prater—but I did not see you."

"Because I was not driving there. Shall we have some tea. I am becoming quite English, you know."

The Count sat down in a low chair beside her and sucked the knob of his heavy cane—just as a bashful lad might have done. He was wondering why he had not married Ulusia von Erlach—though, in all truth, there were difficulties.

"To become English," he said, "it is only necessary to drink tea at five o'clock—for women. In

men there is the "box" and the goddam. I have neither accomplishment."

"But you are acquisitive, Count, is it not so? There is nothing you cannot do if you give your mind to it. I remember you told me so upon the way to Rabka. A woman should never forget a man's virtues—she hears so much of them."

He smiled sardonically. Certainly she was getting on—this little lady of the convent who had come to astonish Vienna with the magnitude of her fortune and the beauty of her face—an order in which the Count placed them naturally. By and by she would forget that salt was necessary to the human race; or remembering it, would but add it to her soup—an addition which should never be necessary in a well-regulated household.

The servants entered at this moment with the tea and diverted the gossip to the worn channels of the salon and the theatre. Yes, she had heard Caruso and did not know whether she preferred Melba or Tetrzzini, but was rather of opinion that the little Spanish girl, who came from the café in the Prater, had a better voice than either. Her ancient Baroness, the immortal Elwitza, had been very deaf since the fire—an infirmity which made of her a delightful companion. They lived laborious days and nights and held the palace against the siege of undesirables. Finally, she was not in love—for that was a question he never failed to ask her.

"When I see a row of men standing round at my parties, they seem to me like so many trees in a

forest," she said, "all are shaken by the same wind of comedy or tragedy. Some lose their leaves sooner than others—but the bark wears. I dance as your Merry Widow dances, because I am glad to be alive and rich. Is not that a good reason, Count ? "

"The best—but you have discovered riches then?"

"To be sure, since by riches come accomplishments—to desire, to do, to learn and to discover ? "

"Discover—an odd word in such a connexion."

She poured him out a cup of tea laughing lightly.

"Discovery is the salt of life, dear Count—was not that another of your good things? The power of knowledge, the wisdom which detects friends or enemies. Oh, I could write a book about it—but you would never read it. Have some fruit and do not look so wise. It frightens me."

He took a sugar-plum from a porcelain dish and toyed with it.

"Does your uncle send you all the news of Rabka ? "

"Every word of it. You are rebuilding the Castle on a modern plan. The men have their parliament and you can do nothing which that parliament does not approve. Where I am concerned you are asking the Courts to make you master of the mine and to go beyond my father's will. The Bishop is helping you because he is a foolish old man, who is frightened of what he calls my madness but is much more afraid of your treachery——"

"Treachery, Countess—— ? "

"I think that I said so. But the Bishop is grown so old, and, of course, I am dependent on him for news of the mine."

"Why, on him, when I am your servant always?"

"Then you shall tell me where he is mistaken. Remember how a woman delights in contradiction. Will you not give me that pleasure?"

He stirred his tea, at a loss what to say. This little devil with the wasp's tongue, surely she was Feodor's daughter—and had something of old iron-willed Philip in her nature also. Well, her day would soon be over. The Courts would see to that.

"Your uncle is a faithful chronicler," he said at last, "there is no trouble with the men now; though I would hesitate to say what might happen—in certain contingencies."

"Meaning my return?"

"I did not say so. Let us not pursue it. You have everything a woman can desire—the finest palace in Vienna after the Hoffburg; money so much that you might build your very carriages of gold—friends—youth. What is the mine to you while it continues to yield this harvest?"

"Are not its people my people. Have I no duty toward them?"

"To those who burned down your house because you wished to teach their children and would burn it again to-morrow if you did not teach them. A happy proletariat—a model community. But I confess that there has been a change since the man Jura died——"

He bent forward and watched her face closely. She did not even colour.

"Let us see," she said slowly, "his death took place—how long ago was it?"

"Exactly twenty days. You know that he died in the madhouse of Pavna."

"Then all they said about him was true?"

"It was quite true. His mother was as mad as he—a queer family, Countess, and one of which we are well rid. Thank you, I will take another cup—your tea is really English."

She poured it out with a steady hand but her eyes were upon his when she spoke again.

"Had I known this," she said quietly, "it would have saved my friend a journey to Rabka——"

"Your friend—ah, the Englishman. Well, we have behaved very well to your friend. Has he not seen everything—the church, the shops, the lake, the machinery. Did he not tell you so when he returned?"

"Oh, he has not returned yet—but I have heard from him."

The Count spilled his tea—there was no mistake at all about it—he spilled it honestly upon his exquisite clothes and uttered an exclamation which it was well that Ulusia did not hear.

"You say he has not returned——"

"Certainly—he will arrive this afternoon—from Strepitza—at six o'clock. I think he is to dine with us."

Oh, the cunning of it. Rudolph knew not whether

she were laughing at him or merely telling a perplexing truth. He believed that the Englishman had left the mine ten days ago—but this journey to Strepitza, what the devil was the meaning of it?

"Well," he continued presently, "you will be able to confirm, then, the news I bring you. We are a happy family at Rabka and your friend, the assassin, has gone where his claims will not help him—unless it be that blood counts for something in the next world as well as in this. Permit me to say that you had a lucky escape—it was admirably contrived. All that the world knows is heroic. You were saved from the burning Castle and you managed to reach your uncle's house at Strepitza. We, however, who know that you were three days with this man—alone in one of the eastern galleries——"

She sprang to her feet—perchance she would have struck him, but a splendid functionary, choosing by a lucky accident that very moment, threw the door wide open and announced a visitor.

"The Lord Amblehurst," he said—and the young Earl entered with a light step as though believing that welcome awaited him.

CHAPTER XVIII

NEWS FROM PAVNA

THE servant shut the folding doors and Ulusia was alone with her friend. Retaining her hand with quite unnecessary persistency, he asked her why she was upset and what had happened. And then she understood that she could not answer him.

" But who is the man ; why does he come here ? " Lord Amblehurst insisted. She withdrew her hand from his and bade him sit.

" He was my father's friend—he is the Governor of Rabka and will remain so if the Courts decree it. Of course he considers himself in some way my guardian—and he can be very rude. Is not that the privilege of guardians ? Well, then, let us say no more about it. I have been so anxious to see you ; I am so glad you have come—is not that sufficient ? "

He protested that it was all-sufficient and sat where she bade him. A fair-haired young Englishman, blessed with a fine physique and a rare fund of animal spirits, he added thereto an insignia of blood and breeding which was unmistakable. Count Rudolph had already pronounced him an aristocrat, and declared that nothing was to be got out of him. But he did not like him the less for that.

They sat upon either side of the little table and for some while their talk was commonplace. Lord Amblehurst would have spoken of the mine, but Her Excellency had more interesting themes.

"So you have come to me straight from my uncle's house?" she began. He contradicted that emphatically.

"Not so—I left the dear old gentleman three days ago. He is much troubled by the gout and declares that if you do not marry after Easter it will be the death of him. Now, really you must try to save an old man's life at any cost."

She laughed but would not look him in the face.

"Your letter told me that the man they call Jura is alive," she said, "did my uncle know of that?"

"I think not—it is always difficult to say exactly how much is in the episcopal mind—but my discreet questions failed to earn a response. He was entirely ambiguous—it remained for Pavna to tell the secret."

"Pavna—but where is Pavna?"

"It is the madhouse upon the road to Mszana. Your friend is there, Countess."

She was quite silent for a long while and he did not know what to make of her. It had been a pleasant thing to scour the mountains as her discreet ambassador who must bring her tidings of an old servant, badly treated by fortune—but that the news should afflict her in this way seemed to him beyond comprehension.

"Yes," he said, "the man was taken there by Count Rudolph's orders three days after you left

Rabka. The doctors certified him as insane and he is in safe keeping, I assure you. Indeed but for a trick I would have come back to you empty handed. But I was born a diplomatist, you know—and that's useful in its way."

"A trick," she said slowly; "but please tell me."

"The officials at the mine gave me an open letter—the Bishop helped me there—and then you see, I did a little bit of forgery and I put the name of Pavna's governor on the envelope. Admittedly very wrong—but useful under the circumstances. I saw your man and talked to him. He is certainly mad, Countess—they are quite wise to keep him where he is."

"Why do you think that?"

"Oh, lots of things—for one, he believes that the mine belongs to him."

"And if it does—if he speaks the truth?"

The Englishman did not know what to say. Perhaps for an instant he could ask if this madness had not afflicted others—but he kept that thought close and would treat the whole suggestion versely.

"Why do you ask me these questions, Countess—can I possibly answer them?"

"I will tell you," she said, looking him full in the face now and caring nothing for the flaming cheeks which betrayed her, "ours is a terrible story. My uncle, Count Philip, died a madman. They say that he went mad after his wife's death—his son is supposed to be buried at Rabka. But if he were not, if the stories are true and he was hidden in the

mine by the Monk Arthur and the old woman Anna—then is he not the master? Oh, you can answer that as well as I—you can tell me what to do for I am without friends and I must, I must know the truth.”

She rose and began to pace the room as though rest were forbidden her until this great question had been answered. As for Lord Amblehurst, he remained the practical common-sense Englishman unmoved by her story and not a little incredulous.

“If that were so,” he remarked quietly, “there would be a hundred proofs of it. To begin with—monk himself——”

“He is dead; he died three years ago in the monastery at Jajce. The woman can do nothing but affirm. No court would hear her, I am sure of it. There remains the child's grave. My uncle tells me that these fables were known at Rabka ten years ago, and that he himself assisted at the exhumation. There is a child buried in the grave—he will swear to it.”

“Then, surely, that's the end of it. These people are impostors; the man is mad. You would not risk your inheritance for an old woman's tale? How can you speak of justice in such a connexion?”

“I must speak of it because I know—I know that Jura has told the truth. Oh, look at him and then at this—is he not the lord Philip's son; could any one deny it?”

She crossed the room and took up a miniature. It was a portrait of the great Count in his uniform of hussars—but had it been in a workman's blouse

then all Rabka would have known the face. Lord Amblehurst thought so too.

"It's a marvellous likeness," he said—and then he hesitated and was afraid to speak.

"Did you not hear the questions Count Rudolph asked?"

"Well, he tried to pump me certainly—a clumsy fellow—he will never make an ambassador. But I think he will not question me again."

"Oh," she said, "I could have hugged you for your answers"—and at this they both laughed together.

"It is never too late to do a good deed," said Lord Amblehurst slowly. "Now, if——"

"Tell me of Pavna," she rejoined, falling instantly to the serious mood which he liked so little. "How is he treated there; what do they do to him?"

Lord Amblehurst shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

"Is it not quite romantic——"

"I know—I know—but tell me all, tell me the truth?"

"Well, the place stands a hundred feet above the river, I suppose. Your friend is in one of the cells of what they call the White Rock—I think he wears chains. The Governor calls him a refractory prisoner and says he has threatened to flog him—but I learned that he dare not do it as flogging is against the law. A devil of a man upon my word—he looked whips at me all the time and said that if Vienna interfered with him, he would fight half your Parliament or get justice. I made out that I had come from the Count and then he melted. He

had done his duty—if the Count wanted the man punished, let him apply to the proper quarters. He, the Governor, would have nothing to do with it. Why should he punish the insane? He believed your friend to be a raving maniac—he would not hear any suggestion to the contrary—and upon my word after I had seen him, I believed the same.”

“Did Jura speak to you of me?”

“He spoke of nothing else?”

“Feelingly he spoke of you and the appointed hour and the summons and God knows what nonsense. The poor fellow thinks he has only to cry ‘open sesame’ to walk out of the asylum. I did not contradict him—I saw that he was quite mad.”

“And all his chatter was meaningless?”

“Absolutely meaningless. You don’t really think it otherwise?”

“Oh—if I knew. The man who could—or who would tell us—is dead.”

“Are you sure of that?”

“Sure—I am told so.”

“Yes, but wouldn’t it be well to ask? I’ll do it for you if you like—I’ve nothing else to do and why shouldn’t I go, if you ask me?”

“If you would,” she said very earnestly.”

“Of course I will. What’s the good of having an uncle an ambassador if you can’t wander round Austria at your will? I should like it of all things. The monk may be dead but some one will have his papers. That goes without saying. I’ll see his Father Superior or whatever you call him and hear

all about it. They'll chaff me at the Marlborough—but what matter? I could stand a lot of chaff for your sake."

He spoke half jestingly but his eyes devoured her as she sat, and so earnest was his gaze that she flinched from it. These undemonstrative Englishmen, had not her friends warned her alike of their pertinacity and of their passion? True, she hardly understood him—and his jargon about the Marlborough was Greek to her. But she had his secret and feared to know that she had it.

"I should be eternally grateful to you," she said quietly; "you know that I am quite alone in this."

"But alone no longer—is that understood? If I return with this news, good or bad, you are alone no longer."

He crossed the room toward her and took her hand.

"I am to find your cousin—if he be that—and finding him you will give me the right henceforth to act for my wife."

"Your wife, Lord Amblehurst—oh, no, no, you do not understand!"

His astonishment was undisguised.

"What do I not understand?"

She could not tell him.

"I do not know what I am saying," she cried, turning from him despairingly, "will you not go to Jajce and let us hear the truth?"

He stood a long while debating it.

"Good God," he said to himself at last, "she is in love with this madman."



"Will you not go to Jajce, and let us hear the truth?"

White Walls

[Page 152.]

CHAPTER XIX

THE SUMMONS

THE madhouse at Pavna lies high amid the hills which embosom the lake of Mszana—and for its far horizon commands the greater peaks of that bold range which runs to the north-east from Vienna and bends again to become the mild Carpathian mountains.

This is a beautiful country and but little known to the tourist. Here Spring treads quickly upon the heels of Winter, devouring the snow as a sun-giant athirst and coming to disclose a land of flowers where yesterday the ice had been all victorious.

Old Count Philip chose this scene and here he built the lone white barrack in which the victims of Rabka and its solitudes are confined. A philanthropist of changing impulses, he knew full well the dangers of that employment by which his riches were won; and in establishing a refuge for those whom the subterranean world robbed of their reason, established also his own security.

It is a long straggling building, guarded on the side of the mountains by giant walls, upon that of the lake by the sheer precipice, down which many a despairing wretch has cast himself headlong and left not even a name behind him. The Governor—

an old soldier always—is responsible nominally to the authorities at Vienna, but in effect to his chiefs at Rabka—and it is to be imagined with what concern such a man as Rudolph of Trieste would hear the pitiful stories the prisoners told or mourn the mad-dened suicides whose loss the Governor deplored.

Here Jura the Wise had been confined nigh three months when the young Englishman forged a pass to visit him and heard his wild account of what had been and what should be at the appointed hour. A diplomatist by his own account, Lord Amblehurst was but a child in the hands of such an accomplished sycophant and liar as the Governor Otto Zauner and the fair account he carried to Vienna testified not a little to that rascal's shrewdness.

Had the Governor told the truth and nothing but the truth, it would have surprised nobody acquainted with the madhouse at Pavna and its system. There they had a short way with the obstinate or the notorious prisoner and it rarely failed them. Let him be goaded to madness by any trick the warders could plot and plan and then sent out to the ramparts to throw himself headlong in protest if he were fool enough to do so. No purple cord bestowed by an autocrat upon his vizier, no dose of hemlock drunk by a tortured Socrates, no vein opened at a Nero's bidding could be swifter or surer than this sentence to the rock. The very lake, they said, was paved by the bones of Pavna's desperates who had hurled themselves headlong because Otto Zauner had willed it.

To the Governor's chagrin this man they named Jura the Wise refused to take so desirable a course. All that could be done by way of subtle incentive had been done in the prison, but in vain. This fellow seemed to care nothing for the chains with which his limbs were loaded, the coarse food, the days of semi-starvation, even the secret and brutal blows inflicted by savage warders failed to quell his desire of life. When his chains were removed and he was sent out "for his health's sake" to the ramparts, the invitation to suicide remained unanswered. In vain the crafty warders would speak of the swift and painless death, of the delirium of that swift flight to the calm waters of the lake, of the years of drudgery and starvation to be spent in the darkness of the penitentiary. Jura heard them but held his peace.

Otto Zauner was not the man to despair. Sooner or later, he said, the man would come to it. It is true that he had been alarmed by the visit which the Englishman, Lord Amblehurst, paid to the madhouse, and this alarm became something worse when he learned that the pass had been forged. Now it seemed to him that the poor wretch, who babbled of the great lord Philip and his heritage, must be silenced at any cost. His vindication might ruin all who had taken part in this conspiracy; certainly it would ruin Otto Zauner, the Governor of Pavna.

Day by day now the subtle scheme of torture was pursued. Removed from his cell in the White

Tower, Jura found himself taking part in fearful scenes, very orgies of mad despair and revolting insanities. For three nights together they chained him to a madman whose animal frenzies surpassed those of the blackest fables of Rabka. He was herded with men who sprang at the doors of their cells like human tigers whenever a face appeared at the wicket by which the warders watched them. The most trifling breach of incomprehensible regulations meant starvation or the whip. He dwelt in a quarter of the prison where the lash fell incessantly. He saw men crucified in irons upon the wall while brute sergeants stripped the flesh from their very bones. He had even seen the branding iron hissing upon white breasts and leaving a foetid rose as its insignia. And still his courage did not flinch; his hope was unbroken.

Oh, she would know—she, at whose bidding he had abandoned the kingdom of darkness, she would save him. This new world, remote and terrible as it was, dazed and blinded him. He worshipped the sun-god no longer, was not awed by dawn or eve, had no eyes for the wonders of gorge or mountain, but only for the pictures which must remain unforgotten. Had she not been embosomed in his very arms when he carried her from Rabka to the mine? And the days succeeding the flight when she had been his prisoner, when every word she spoke remained a jewel of his hope—oh, she would remember, she would save him yet.

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Now this was the tenth day since Lord Amblehurst had visited the prison and it is one long spoken of as a momentous day in the life of Jura the Wise.

Ten days had he been incarcerated in a dungeon beneath the White Tower when the summons came. Determined to drive him to the ramparts they had fettered him at the ankles and put gyves upon his wrists. His bed was of straw—his cell but a filthy tunnel of the crypt, a rank black hovel from which a dog would have turned. Here they starved and beat him, shutting him from light and sound and the footsteps of men. And here a jailor came to him on the tenth day.

"You are to go to the visitors' ward," the fellow said, "you are wanted there."

Jura leaped up from the straw believing that the end was at hand and this, surely, the day of his deliverance. Oh, she had sent for him according to the promise. Her power, her influence had made themselves felt—he would be tried for the crime, perchance, but assuredly acquitted. Visions of a new world to which he might be called flitted through his burning brain and drove him headlong. He would go out to men and to cities—he would find her as the oath compelled; he would begin to live again because she commanded it. Called by hope, he staggered after the warder and put on his better dress as he was commanded. The way seemed paved with promise—he followed it with the footsteps of a little child.

They led him across an open courtyard into a little room with a sanded floor and a high wall where hung a portrait of the Kaiser. It had just fallen dark, but a bald electric lamp in the dome above threw long shadows upon the bare stone and but half disclosed the pale face of the girl who waited for him. She, however, foreign to all restraints, and caring nothing for man or edict, cast down her bundle on the floor and had caught him about the neck and kissed him before he so much as uttered her name.

"Mathilde—it is you then!"

"It is I, Jura—the Mother Anna has sent me—I come to tell you that all is well with her—will you not kiss me, Jura—will you not say that you are glad?"

He withdrew from her embrace but did not release her hands.

"The Mother Anna sent you—is it well with her then?"

"She lives upon the island—the people would have it so—no harm has befallen her. Yesterday at noon I left and am here to-day—oh, the long weary road—the long weary road—and yet I would that I might walk it every day if it would bring me to thee, Jura."

He was touched by her distress, and leading her to the plain deal bench he bade her sit and tell him all.

"Had you money to come to me?"

"The little mother gave it to me. I have three

crowns still left—they are enough, Jura. If I must return——”

“ Would you stop in this place, Mathilde ? ”

“ With you, Jura, was there need to ask me that ? ”

“ Has my mother any message for me, Mathilde ? ”

She stooped and picked up her bundle. This odd baggage spoke of a woman's motherliness and of her belief that food and clothes are a man's first need.

“ There are grapes from the Castle garden and brandy from old Martin's cellar. The money is what she thinks you will least have need of. The letter I am to give to no other and to destroy if it should not come to your hands. It is here, Jura, for I have carried it where you alone have the right to find it.

She undid her dress at the throat and he took the precious document. Then, it may be, he remembered the warder's presence and turned covert eyes to the place where the man should have been standing. But they were alone in the room—old Otto Zauner, cunning fellow, had taken good care that they should be.

“ Has Mother Anna received the letter that I wrote her, Mathilde ? ”

The girl's black eyes opened wide.

“ She has received no letter save one that old Martin had from Vienna.”

“ Was that from the Countess ? ”

“ I do not know, Jura—Mother Anna does not show such things to me for I cannot read.”

She spoke with a flush of shame and he understood her distress. The letter which she carried was brief enough—he judged that Mother Anna had thought it wiser to spare words. She was well and waiting for his release. He would go to Vienna when they set him free, for such was the Countess' command. "This is for your ear alone, my son," the letter ran. "She is waiting for you at the palace which all the city knows, and the money that I send is for the journey. Let the doors be open to your wit as it shall be wise. There is none who will harm Philip's son when the truth is known."

He folded the letter up and asked another question upon it.

"When did Her Excellency write to my mother, Mathilde?"

"If it were Her Excellency, the letter came three days ago, Jura."

"Then you will carry my letter to the little mother. You will say that I am doing what she wishes."

The girl bent her head. She had hoped for a different story. Oh, if he would but be the Jura of the old days! No harm had come to them then—but this madness, this revolt, this dream of the fables, had it not brought him a sorry portion?

"Jura," she exclaimed of a sudden, "I have seen the Governor Zauner and he has spoken to me. If we would leave Pavna and go to Russia, that would be the end of all your troubles. Will you not think of it, Jura? The little mother would

send us money and we could begin life again—across the mountains where they would forget you. I will follow you to the world's end if you will but trust me—oh, Jura, if you would but trust me ! ”

She clung very close to him and her pleading became passionate ; what a mad dream it had all been ; to what a cruel goal it led them. And here was freedom upon the Governor's word, life, liberty, love—if he would but hearken. He, however, repulsed her gently. He did not understand what the truth might mean to her.

“ Her Excellency sends for me to go to Vienna,” he said quietly, “ that is a summons for which I have been waiting these many days. I must obey it, Mathilde. All that I have suffered is nothing now that the letter has come. Do you think that I would have permitted them to have treated me as they have done if I had known of this ? There is no prison in Galicia could hold me an hour if it were in my mind to go free. But I have waited for Her Excellency, and now she has written.”

It was torture to Mathilde, but she persisted.

“ You are mad, Jura, mad to speak of such things. Do you think that you will be well received, you who are but a workman ? They will laugh at you in Vienna—she sends for you to be a jest. I tell you now that there is safety across the frontier in Russia, where I will work for you and make you a home. Will you leave me for such madness as this—for a woman who will despise you because you go to her ? No, no, I cannot believe it—you have

lost your reason, you are a child and I must save you, Jura—because I love, oh, God, because I must love you.”

Her emotion moved him and he paced the narrow room in dire perplexity. How if this uneducated girl were a better prophet than any of them? Would laughter and scorn be his portion if he went to Vienna? A pride of his birthright forbade him to believe that. No, no, he was the lord Philip's son and the truth would put armour upon him. He would go to Vienna and demand his rights in the lord Philip's name.

“The little mother should have told me the truth long ago,” he said, “I came near to it but did not dare to believe it. I have lived upon it in this wretched place, it has been life to me. When I go to Vienna it will be to demand my rights and to reward all who have been faithful to me. You will be among the number, Mathilde—I shall never forget what you have done for me—you will be the faithful Mathilde always. But I have my place in the world and I must fill it. Yes, I shall go to Vienna—I shall tell them—it is my duty.”

CHAPTER XX

A VOICE FROM THE HEIGHTS

THEY gave him his liberty after Mathilde's visit and drove him out once more to the temptation of the ramparts. After all, Providence smiled upon Otto Zauner, and nothing could have been better than the Mother Anna's letter.

"The fool will risk his neck for this," said the wily Governor, "if he tries to go by the mountains, we shoot him; if he leaps, he will be drowned. Nothing could be better."

Which implies the truth that the purpose of the girl's errand was well known to Otto Zauner and the letter discovered and read by his unresting spies.

This man was far from clever. Had he debated the matter closely, he would have known that Ulusia's friendship for his prisoner might be dangerous. In Vienna, the miner—for so he regarded Jura—could readily be made a hero, while he, Otto Zauner, would be but the black man of the story. This, however, was a possibility with which he would not reckon. Was not the Count Rudolph his friend, and did he not save his official neck and butter his official bread by that worthy's patron-

age? Certainly it were better to have this madman out of the road.

And so he sent Jura to the ramparts and bade the guard give him rope enough. Day by day at sunset the poor wretch kept his lonely vigil above the sleeping lake and remembered the stories of those who had chosen the arbitrament of its placid waters. If madman he were, his hallucinations would have afforded doubtful satisfaction to the man who tempted him, for he was not one who sought death but life. Hourly now he searched the gaunt face of the cliff with discerning eyes, asking if he had the courage for that supreme ordeal which should win all or lose all in a dreadful instant. Ah, God, the desire of it, because she called him, because she willed that he should go to her.

This deliberate survey of possibilities rewarded him but ill. He perceived that while the precipice was sheer at the summit, the foot of it shelved toward the lake and terminated in a pebbly rim of foreshore upon which a boat might be beached. By here and there, a few poor bushes thrust alpine roots into cleft and cranny; there was even a tree to bend sagging branches to the lake and invite his excited imagination to far-fetched hopes. But these soon passed—by them salvation might not be; nor could he hide from his eyes, the picture of the broken body falling headlong from stage to stage into the black water which must entomb it.

Here was the impasse and no logic could open it out. He must leap to the waters or remain Otto

Zauner's prisoner to the end. Mere reason said that such a leap was death—but he would have nothing to do with mere reason. The fever of desire was upon him, and conning the path again, he discovered a promontory of the rock standing out above the shelving cliff and promising good foothold to him who had the courage to dare it.

Thus came a new thought. How if a man should so leap that his falling body were received, not by the rock but by the kindly waters of Lake Mszana? To his mad imagination the thing seemed feasible and the idea was one to occupy him many days, during which he avoided the promontory but remembered it. •

If he had the courage! This he said to himself each day at dawn, depicting the leap and trying to believe that freedom could not otherwise be won. Upon the other side were the hosts of suggestion, the mocking laughter in his ears and the whispering voices which named a fearful death upon the rocks and the satisfaction of those who had driven him to the doom. Again and again he would approach the promontory and turn back from it in despair until, indeed, it seemed that he had abandoned his purpose and must seek another. And this brought him to the fatal day—when walking upon the ramparts as usual, he became aware that a voice was calling him from yonder mountain across the chasm, and calling him so insistently that he could hear no other sounds nor turn his eyes from the place whence the voice came.

Hallucination, the world has said, yet how many a world-famed deed had known a motive less plausible? This man had come out of the very bowels of the earth to the world of light and of the cities—and a woman had commanded him to come.

His whole life had been an exercise of the imagination, bidding him shape this and that object of the books, imagine this scene, live the other.

And now he seemed to stand upon the brink of a vast abyss—upon the one side the kingdom of shadows and the living death; upon the other the unknown Eldorado at whose fountains of pleasure he might drink deep. From this imagined land the voice came to him, inviting him to dare all that he might live. He listened as one entranced: the prison behind him sank back into the mists of unreality; the eastern sky blazed as with the spreading lights of dawn; the mountains were golden pinnacles—the fabulous city took shape in their heart and opened her gates to him.

Gladly, as a man impelled by uncontrollable impulse, he vaulted the low wall which was the ramparts defence and ran to the very brink of the promontory. A giant's strength, husbanded during the years, hurled him headlong above the lake. He heard a cry from the ramparts, fell to a delirium of the senses surpassing words and then went down as a stone to the black waters. Sensation left him upon this—he struggled upward believing that all was finished; discerned the sky and knew not whether it were sky or water;

was sucked under again as his strength failed, and rose again, to roll half-dead upon the strip of beach, and to say that this surely was the end.

He had leaped a hundred feet down to the waters of the Lake Mszana and his giant strength had saved him. There is no like story in the records of the madhouse at Pavna, nor will any be told while the promontory bears Jura's name.

The poor fool had been there but was there no longer. So said a warder who searched for him at sunset peering down the chasm and anticipating with grim satisfaction the Governor's verdict. Had you told him that the prisoner lived and was lying even then in a cleft of the rock below, he would have laughed in your face. Time enough when darkness set in to seek the broken body and bury it. Perchance the quest would be in vain—such had been known at Pavna though the records made no mention of it. But the better story remained—the trap had been set and the fool had entered it.

He went upon his errand gladly—that would have been an hour after Jura leaped and just at the moment when strength had come back to him, and with strength all the desire of life and action which animated him from the beginning. Now was the freed man quick to perceive his chances and to grasp at them. A clever foot carried him from plateau to plateau of the shelving rock. Sometimes he would go standing, sometimes upon all fours as a brute thing upon a cliff-side; but the horror of his fall drove him onwards as from a madness which might

recur. Let his will be what it might, he could not still that drumming in his ears, nor obliterate that sensation of the leap which would act the dire moment anew and seem to send him hurtling down through the rock he trod. With this he battled firmly, creeping foot by foot along the narrow path and emerging at last upon the broad and kindly shore of the greater lake, where he might run up a fair road and dare for the first time to hope that freedom had been won.

The sun had set by this time and the night fallen very dark. He espied a village by the water-side but feared to enter it, and the detour carried him up the side of a low green hill, whence he could see the distant lights of other villages and far away upon a black horizon the lanterns of the railway to Cracow the capital. Of this he knew nothing, nor of its possibilities, and he walked on briskly, avoiding the homes of men and the vicinity of hamlets. When fatigue, unutterable and unconquerable at last overtook him, he lay down by the very brink of the water and slept for three good hours. It was after midnight when he awoke and the moon shone out gloriously from a clear heaven of stars. He knew that he was hungry and athirst and stumbled on, believing that after all Otto Zauner was the wiser man.

Ah, God, what a weary road to paradise and the gates! How remote he seemed from the living world, from men and from salvation! The stern immutable hills frowned upon him, the golden

water mocked him, the silence of the lone night frightened him. Many days of suffering had he known in his life, but never such an hour as this, when it seemed that a grave upon the hill-side must engulf him and all the dream surrender to the eternal darkness of the tomb.

For dawn he prayed as the blind for light. He counted the hours as the church clocks chimed them and cursed their tardiness. For a crust of bread, he, Jura, whom men had named the Wise, would have bartered his life, his hope in that hour of temptation and despair.

He laboured on, following the shores of the lake until it bent inward again to become the bank of a great river running henceforth across a vast plain which the railway traversed. There were no villages here; nor did he espy any lights but those upon the distant railway. An express roaring by in the darkness affrighted him at the first, for the whole heaven above appeared incarnadined by the belching flame which poured from the locomotive's mouth, while the brilliantly-lighted carriages were so many stars being hurtled onward into darkness.

This fear passed swiftly, however, for the mine had made him familiar with the steam engine and his good common sense accounted for the rest. Perhaps he regretted the passing of the train, the sense of companionship it suggested and the message of hope it spoke. When he walked on again it was with a recurrence of the sensation that he

had left the cities of men far behind and would never behold them any more.

In this mood the new day found him. A fiery dawn broke suddenly, heralded by none of those prismatic wonders of form and colour with which the mountains had made him familiar. A flat country revealed itself flatly. He perceived a river running brown as ochre through monstrous banks of mud ; there were marshes on either side and near to him, so near that its discovery brought him to a sudden halt, a ferry-man's hut with a rude enclosure round about it. Whether to approach this and to cast himself upon the hospitality of the people—to do this or to flee from it Jura knew not at first. But, presently, he said that if he fled, he would certainly perish of fatigue and hunger—and with this in his mind, he walked boldly to the door and beat upon it.

“ Who are you—whence do you come ? ”

“ I am a traveller from Rabka. I seek food and shelter. Open to me.”

“ What traveller comes with the sun upon such a road ? Are you another from Pavna then ? I have had many of your kind. Get you gone before harm is done.”

A burly man appeared at the door—and thus was his talk. Jura had seen so many evil faces at Rabka that this face did not repel him nor was he bent upon an argument.

“ I have money and will repay. If you do not believe me, come and see. Is it anything to you

whence I come? Open immediately and earn your reward."

The fellow undid the bolt warily and presently appeared, fresh from his bed and tousled. The uncouth figure at his door did not reassure him. He was about to slam it in Jura's face when an after-thought checked him.

"Show me your money?" he cried.

Jura thrust a nervous hand into the belt about his waist and produced a packet, still wet and clammy. Very methodically and with a watchful eye he opened it and shook ten gold pieces into his hand.

"Give me food and drink," he said, "and set me on yonder bank, and I will pay you five crowns."

"It is a bargain, friend—you should have spoken this way before. Come in, I say—it's nothing to me whether you be from Cracow or Pavna. I'm but a ferryman and know how to do my duty."

He opened the door wide and bade the traveller enter. As for the hut, its furniture was no better than a bed of straw and an old oak chest which the smoke of centuries had blackened. A fire burned in a narrow grate—there were bottles of wine upon a shelf by the chimney and some coarse bread and cheese for their neighbours. The fellow soon set the food upon the table while he bade his guest warm himself.

"Many come this way," he remarked meaningly, "the poor devils have little wherewith to pay me, I can tell you. But I am a queer chap and I don't

think overmuch about the money. You caught me in my bed, and that's no place to warm civility. Eat and drink, friend, for you look ill. You'll be safe enough here—'twould be a fête-day which brought the police to Borowitza."

Jura made no reply for a little while. The long draughts of honest wine were as fire to his veins. He ate the coarse bread wolfishly and in hunks, while the ferryman watched him with half-closed eyes and many ideas. Should he barter with this man or rob him? The latter seemed the wiser thing, for he liked not so shapely a giant or one with so sharp a tongue.

"Mamy's the good fellow I have sent to freedom in my day," he confessed and then asked: "What's the odds? Who's the better because a poor devil is in the hands of the police? They pay me what they can and get over to the station before Cracow. I say they are friends of mine and no questions are asked. Do you rest here and dry yourself. You shall sleep in my bed and when you are rested we will set out. Oh, trust me to know an honest man when I see one. You can't deceive Boris, the ferryman, I assure you."

Jura made no direct reply to this. His questions were about the railway, how far it was to the station, how long it would take him to get to Vienna? When he learned that he could be there on the following morning if he caught the night mail from Borowitza, he was far from being reassured. The alarm would be all over the country by that

time and the police be out. Still, nothing could be gained by haste—and if this fellow would harbour him until dusk, he might yet have a chance.

"You say that the railway is two miles from yonder bank. Very well, you shall put me across at nightfall and I will give you another gold piece. That's more than you could earn here in a year, is it not? Well, prove your fidelity and when I get to Vienna, I will reward you richly. In this way our interests are mutual."

The fellow agreed, his tongue in his cheek and his eye upon the leather girdle. Then he plied his guest with more of the wine he had so extolled with extravagant eulogy.

"There's stuff for the Kaiser," he said, "do you drink it and it will put new life into you. Afterwards you shall sleep while I watch. Oh, I'll have no mishaps under my roof I can tell you. Let there be so much as a mule across the marsh and my eyes name it when others would not see it at all. You may sleep while you will here—there's no safer place in Galicia."

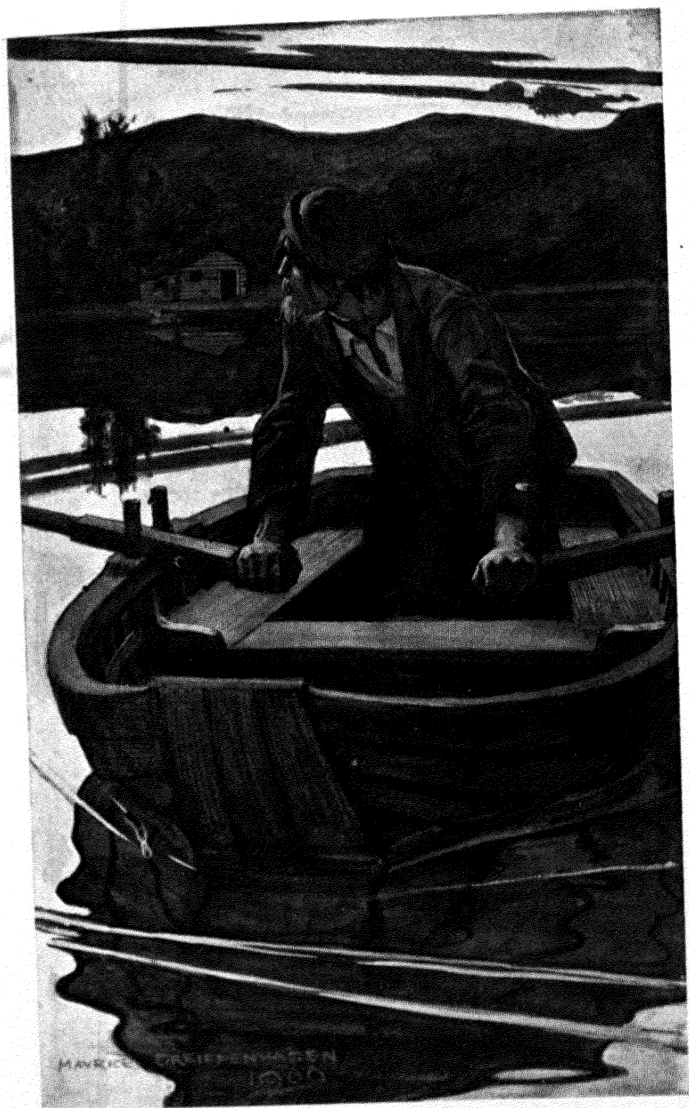
Jura said that he supposed so. He was so tired now that he could hardly walk to the mean bed which the fellow prepared for him, and whatever the peril of it might be, he knew that he must sleep. The next hour found him a huddled mass upon the straw, so exhausted, so worn that a stranger might have been hard put to it to say whether he were alive or dead.

He was alone in the hut when he awoke and every

vestige of the meagre hospitality had been removed from the table. Rich bands of light, bending from the west, spoke of afternoon and the hour of sunset. He rose hastily, his limbs stiff and aching, but his spirit unsubdued. A simple mind believed it possible that the good fellow, who owned the hut, had gone out to watch on his behalf, and determined to follow after, he left the place and went down toward the river. But not a sign could he see of any ferryman—nor was there a human being in sight upon any horizon. This gave him courage and he began to say that there was no need to remain longer at the hut and that he would find the road to the railway himself. Had he not been master of the boats at Rabka and could not he master this crazy punt, about which the river splashed with so doleful a song. It was the work of an instant to cast it loose, and he had just done so and was sitting there, oars in hand, when he remembered the simple truth that the owner of the boat must swim the river if he would regain possession of it. At which he stopped and laughed for the first time since he had left Pavna.

"I am growing a fool," he said. "This ~~is~~ no way to treat a kindness. The man has gone to the village and will return. An hour is nothing to me—I will wait until he comes."

He made the boat fast and sat awhile by the water's edge, watching the twilight creep westward and the chrome fade from a darkening heaven. Anon, in the far distance he perceived figures against the



"He . . . rowed swiftly to the opposite bank."

sky line, and watching them a long while, he named them for horsemen riding down to the river. This frightened him exceedingly and he began to call aloud for the man who should row him over. That worthy, hidden by the bank of a dyke a hundred yards away, gave no sign nor betrayed himself by any movement. Minute by minute, however, ~~the~~ horsemen were drawing nearer, at such a speed that Jura could now distinguish their very habiliments and tell himself that they were a police post from Rabka in pursuit of him. This alarmed him exceedingly and believing that he had the right so to do, he cast the boat loose again and rowed swiftly to the opposite bank. Half an hour afterwards he struck a high-road bordered by poplars, and following this for a mile or more he came at last to the station and imagined that the end of his troubles was at hand.

A brief halt to collect himself and to arrange his shabby dress put a damper upon this early optimism. It is true that Monk Arthur, honest teacher that he was, had tried to school his pupil in the common things of the common life and had talked often with him concerning railways and steamships and even shown him pictures of man's achievements in the art of travel. But never had the worthy priest stooped to details, or suggested what a pupil should do who arrived at a country station and desired to go thence to Vienna. Jura found this a severe task. He entered the station with what assurance he could command and, addressing the

first official he met, declared his desire to travel to Vienna by the evening train.

"Very well, mein herr, very well," was the response, "but have you taken your ticket?"

Jura stared at him with pitiful inquiry.

"I have money," he said almost passionately, for he believed that they were about to refuse him—"it is here, mein herr."

He thrust his hand into his bosom again and would have drawn out the packet. The official watched him curiously; he understood what that silence meant; he could interpret that bitter cry of grief and astonishment.

"I have been robbed," Jura said, but with such dignity that even his questioner was touched, "I cannot go, mein herr—I am sorry that I asked you."

The official made no reply, but turning away with a shrug he went out to the platform at which the express must draw up.

Jura, however, sat long, watching the people with wistful eyes, and when at last the huge locomotive thundered into the station, he shuddered as a man who has lived his brief day of hope but may not hope any longer.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BALL AT THE EMBASSY

VIENNA could make but little of Ulusia von Erlach—and it soon abandoned the attempt to make anything at all.

Some said boldly that she was a little fool whose brains had been addled by long residence in a convent. Others thought her the true daughter of that wild fellow, Fedor von Erlach, whose debaucheries had astonished the city many years ago and were still remembered. She was waiting her opportunity, they said—and let the right man come along and a beginning be made with a conventional marriage, and then they would see.

Whatever the personal factor, all agreed that she knew how to use the famous Erlach Palace, and that her entertainments were worthy of its reputation; dinners, *soirées musicales*, balls celebrated the brief season of spring. The most exclusive society in the world could tolerate reservation and childish hauteur in return for these things. The priests found her generous if not prone to the practice of pieties—but they reflected that her spiritual welfare was in the hands of the good Bishop Heinrich and could very well be left there.

Her days at this time might have been exciting enough had she willed that they should be so. The mornings found her on horseback; the afternoons driving in the Prater or visiting; the evenings witnessed her triumphs in many great houses and the confusion of the hordes of well drilled youths who followed after.

Whispers of love were often in her ears. She moved through a splendid world of light, laughter and music, and ever seemed to hear the threadbare story of her charm and its consequences. Had she responded with vivacity or even a suspicion of coquetry, men would have fought for her as gladiators in a new arena. But she repelled even the zealots by her reticence, silenced the most eloquent by her cold patronage. They came to say, of her at last that she was not a true southerner at all but a daughter of the North, who would never burn at any man's kiss or understand the meaning of his passion. Herein they were quite mistaken. This mere child lived still in a dreamland, but it was one upon which reality had cast its shadow.

She had a fine capacity for enjoyment; could have danced or piped with the best of them if it had not been for the events at Rabka and the aftermath of doubt she garnered there.

The momentous secret discovered during the days when she had been a fugitive burned its doubt into her very soul and put a pall upon every pleasure.

How, indeed, if the fables were true and he whom they called Jura the Wise were the true master of

the palace and its riches. Then for a fact was her house of pleasure built upon sand and deservedly must fall. She believed that it was so, and patiently and with resignation she waited for the end. Let the sacrifice be what it might, she knew that she would have the courage to make it.

The Englishman had been gone to Bosnia ~~some~~ some days at this time and no news had come from him. She had seen old General Wagner, the lord Philip's closest friend, and had told him her story very faithfully, to his great astonishment and incredulity. It is true that he promised to carry the matter, if necessary, to the Kaiser himself, and declared his intention of obtaining Jura's immediate release. But he confessed at the same time his utter disbelief in the story, and the dangers which attended its disclosure.

"If this man is not mad and cannot prove his words," he said, "they will imprison him for life. Are you willing that he should run such a risk?"

She said that she was. Her faith was not to be shaken nor her determination undermined when she resolved to surrender everything to one who had so good a claim to it—provided he established his identity and could convince the Court that he was Philip's son.

When she told the General that she had summoned the man to her house and would harbour him there until the days of the trial, he exclaimed upon her imprudence but could not divert her intention. His own good sense planned a different course; he

would write to Bishop Heinrich, have this mad fellow kept awhile at Strepitza and then sent back to the mines under a safe-conduct, should his story prove false, as it must. There he did not doubt that Count Rudolph of Trieste would be able to take care of the man. At which thought he smiled ~~and renewed~~ his promise to Ulusia.

She was very sad when she returned to the Erlach Palace, and her depression seemed oddly out of place in that gay city.

Vienna is the most enchanting capital in Europe in the days of April and May, and nowhere may such wonderful uniforms and gowns, such handsome men or such beautiful women be seen.

Driving to her house from the General's quarters at the War Office, Ulusia passed many a fine equipage, surprised more than one dubious romance, and waved her greeting to several would-be lovers. The whole city was redolent of flowers and pretty faces, of voluptuous music and glorious sunshine. Even the old palace appeared to have put on fine raiment to herald the summer, and the gorgeous crimson flowers which bedecked its windows were entirely in keeping with that pretty scene.

Her servant Hans, a man she had learned to trust before others in the palace, awaited her upon her return, and had confidential questions to answer. Her inquiry whether the telegrams had been dispatched obtained a welcome affirmative. Hans assured her that her instructions had been carried

out in every particular, and that all was prepared—adding the emphatic declaration that she might rely upon his fidelity. A brief word of thanks sent her to her writing table, and there she opened a long and fulsome letter of apology—the sixth in as many days—from Count Rudolph, in which he protested his homage anew and added ~~for her~~ amusement a further account of her mad friend and of his death in the lake of Mszana.

“There is no doubt,” said the Count, “that the man committed suicide. He was closely watched, but not so closely that he did not find an opportunity to settle his affair in the lake of Pavna. I regret this, for I had already submitted a case to the Court and would have taken a judicial decision. But chiefly let me express my sense of desolation that this ridiculous imposter should have won your sympathy and caused you, I fear, so many hours of disquiet. Believe me, there never was the shadow of a truth in these old stories. The poor rogue they called Jura the Wise was the son of the old woman, Anna. His father was an unknown lover of a romantic girl; the fable, the fruit of his desertion. I believe the woman to be no saner than the son, and that her infatuation was directly responsible for his death. Be assured that we are well quit of him, and in all that I have done I have studied your interests and those of the great trust bequeathed to me.”

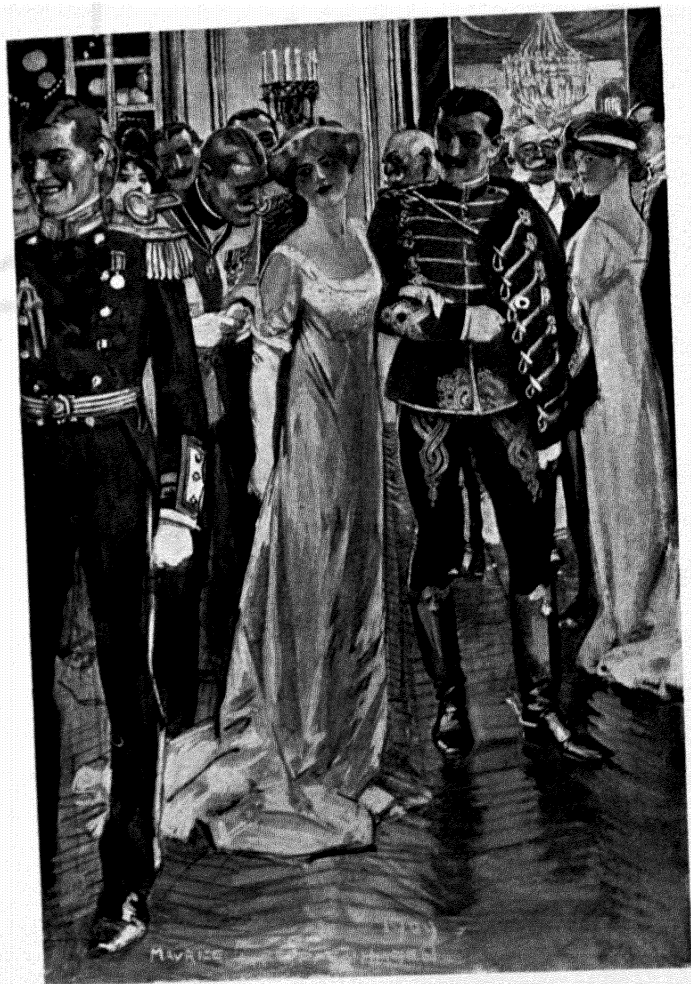
She put the letter down, disbelieving every word of it, yet sadly troubled. Lord Amblehurst had

hinted at the perils threatening Jura in the mad-house, and she was well acquainted with Rudolph. So it seemed just possible that this story might differ from the others and be true. What the truth might mean to her, what new view of life it might present, she would not contemplate for the moment. ~~Something~~ of the melancholy and sorrow of Rabka's life crept upon her and chid her doubting. He was Philip's son—oh, she knew that, and if he had come to Vienna, the world would have knelt to him. This was her unalterable conviction. A great man had groped his way through the darkness and stood for an instant at the gates of light. Tragic indeed if Fate stayed him on the threshold.

She had often amused herself by depicting Jura's entrance into Viennese society, the curiosity he would excite, the admiration his magnetic personality must win. There was about him an authority and a majesty she had found irresistible, and she did not doubt that the world would endorse her verdict. She saw him the true master of the palace, the yoke cast from him, the kingdom assured. Her own part in that glorious hour was not to be played even by her imagination. She wished Jura to reign and to conquer; she was but a woman and dominion must be denied to her.



There was a ball at the American Embassy that night, and she went with the old Baroness Elwitza to play the part expected of her, and to hear again



"There was a ball at the American Embassy that night."
[White Walls]

(Page 182.)

the amorous inanities, to which the days were accustoming her.

This was a splendid spectacle, and yet many did not hesitate to say that Ulusia von Erlach was the dominant personality, the true mistress of that glittering assembly.

She moved through the immense rooms as one who received homage willingly but esteemed it at no great price. Men said they had never seen her so radiant—a fire of dignity flashed in her eyes, her smile enchanted, the touch of her hand made pulses leap. Dancing with an abandon none had expected of her, the rumour passed anon that she had found a lover, and henceforth every movement was watched, every glance aside detected.

Who was the lucky devil—what Adonis had moved this glorious icicle or discovered the heart in a superb automaton?

Assuredly it would be for love that she laughed so lightly, for what other motive might trouble Ulusia, and where was the authority which could compel her?

Refusing to believe in the story of a *mésalliance*, fingers were pointed at many an innocent but hopeful satellite, at soldiers, diplomatists, even at the princes of the Royal house. These were at no pains to deny the accusations, but Ulusia's very deeds gave the lie to them. She was gracious to all the world to-night, it appeared. Bald-headed generals, who hymned Erato in waning falsetto, ridiculous gallants who rolled to the assault as

barrels to a cellar, dashing officers of cavalry, earnest gunners, attachés, mere nobles alike earned a winning smile or rallied to a poignant jest. Amazed by this new revelation of her wit and beauty, men promised her the glories of the year.

It is true that she had been a long time "arriving," but this they set down to the convent's teaching; and since she had discovered that society really cared very little about those old stories of the world, the flesh and the devil, she would certainly go far.

Ulusia herself could have given you no good account of this almost dramatic change, nor did she trouble about it.

She felt, she knew not why, that some new thing was about to come into her life, that the long years of gloom and seclusion were passing and that even Rabka's shadow would lie upon her no more. A consuming desire to taste of the pleasures, upon which others exclaimed so rapturously, drove her to comparative excesses which astonished even the aged Baroness. Here she was aping the greatest coquettes in the city, giving her roses to this man, her confidences to that, dancing as wildly as any coryphée from the opera-house in the Ringstrasse, as ready to press the hand which pressed her own as the oldest roué at the Embassy. And all this because something was going to happen at the Erlach Palace, something inevitable, something which would make her life very different from anything it had ever been before

Vienna goes to bed betimes, and you must visit the officers' quarters and the more tawdry houses of pleasure to find many awake when the clock strikes one. As it happened, it was just half past one when Ulusia returned to the ~~Em~~ Palace and five minutes later when the astonished Hans confronted her with the news.

"He is here, Excellency—he is waiting in the white boudoir."

There was no need to mention any names. Ulusia understood in an instant that Jura had come to Vienna and had found his way to her house. Turning to the amazed Baroness, she declared her intention of seeing her friend alone.

"He is my cousin," she said quietly, "and he has come at my request. I am going to justify him, Baroness, and you must help me. Remember the life he has lived and the ordeal this must be to him. I will see him alone, and you shall speak to him to-morrow."

She would hear no rebuke, accept no admonition and not delaying even to cast off her opera cloak she ran up the wide stairs and stood a moment at the door of the boudoir. Here a long glass showed her a superb vision of roses nestling in soft tress which shone as burnished gold, flaming cheek and eyes afire, of the sheen of delicate pink satin and the glitter of jewels. She turned from it with pleasure, and opening the door she entered tremulously, as a young girl going to her lover.

CHAPTER XXII

INHERITANCE

THE lord Philip had been a lover of Paris in his youth, and the white boudoir in the Erlach Palace was one of fifty rooms which bore witness to his good taste and to his riches.

Here were treasures which fortunes would not purchase in the twentieth century—cabinets from St. Cloud, clocks of which the fellows were at Fontainebleau, vitrines from the chateaux, mirrors of colossal height and intricate beauty of framing, low chairs in exquisite tapestry, the masterpieces of Bouchier and the Vernets, the cabinets which Watteau had painted.

Of all that adornment, the carpets, soft in texture and brilliant in hue, spoke of the East and its industries. Had you named the apartment as a salon of the glorious days of Louis XV, that title must have passed unquestioned.

In such an apartment Ulusia found Jura again and welcomed him to Vienna. Here the abandon of which he had been the subject at the Embassy attained its consummation.

She entered the room softly, her heart beating rapidly, her cheeks on fire. The wise Hans had turned on many electric lamps, and in the flood of

clear white light she perceived a cloaked figure standing before a great mirror and motionless thereat. Then a loud cry greeted her, and in an instant she was held in giant arms, clasped close, covered with burning kisses.

"It is you—you—and I have found you—my beloved—and I have found you."

No other words than these were at his command. All the dire hours had found their reward in this; the man's whole life was lived in that supreme instant when he caught her to his heart and dared in her own house what he never would have dared in his own.

She freed herself at last and tried to push him from her. A nervous outbreak akin to hysteria bade her utter a commonplace, and she indicated the crushed satin and the tousled hair, and commanded him to understand what he had done. Upon his part a sudden fear of himself and of her abashed him. This celestial vision and the picture which the glass had shown him—the picture of a worn and weary man, with eyes unutterably sad and pallid face, and the great coarse cloak which the officials at the railway had found for him—God, he could say, what had they two in common!

"I leaped from the rock at Pavna," he said quietly, "and found my way to the railway. A boatman robbed me, and I had no money—then the train arrived, but the chief remembered me and put me into the carriage. There was another waiting for me at Vienna, and he lent me his cloak and

sent me here. I do not know why they should have helped me—I cannot understand why I found friends.”

She laughed at this and answered him joyously.

“ My servant Hans telegraphed to every station between here and Borowitza. We ordered that your tickets were to be given you and your journey made comfortable. I knew that you would escape them, Jura—I knew that you would come to me, and so I sent the telegrams.”

He caught her in his arms again and thanked her by his kisses.

“ I have known that it would be so,” he cried ; “ I could have made my way from Pavna any day, but I waited for the summons. She will send for me, I said—she will not have forgotten.”

It was said so simply, with such dignity that it touched her to the quick, and looking up into his eyes she forgot the dusty figure, the dirty cloak, the torn boots—forgot all but the man’s face and the truth she read therein. This was Jura, the lord Philip’s son. No other could have stood the ordeal at the Erlach Palace.

“ I knew that it would be to-night,” she said, “ I went to the American Embassy so that I should not have to count the minutes. But I was telling myself all the time that you would come, and this has not surprised me. Now we shall keep you until the end. I have told your father’s friend, General Wagner, that I meant to do so, and he approves. You need fear nothing here—it is your

own house, Jura ; you are the true master of it."

She would not wait for an answer but rang the bell and summoned Hans to the room, and when he appeared she commanded him to bring wine and food, and to tell the Baroness to come down. Jura, however, fearing the ordeal, begged her to desist, saying that they had given him food and drink and that his greatest need was sleep.

"I have had but two hours in as many days," he said with dignity ; "remember how I come into your world, the sights I have seen, the sounds with which my ears ring. Oh, it is all wonderland. I never thought the earth so big—I did not believe that so many people were alive. And the lights and all the shapes which go to and fro before my eyes, the height of your heaven above me, the tongues clamouring, the endlessness of it all—I would fly from that, I would rest that I may ask myself if I am fit to live in such a world, or must find it insupportable. Do you not understand that, Ulusia—do you not see that I must rest ? "

She assented immediately, giving her orders to Hans, who had watched the scene open-eyed and was still lost in perplexity. This ragged fellow on the sofa, this giant of a man whose boots were tumbling from his feet, whose collar was a ragged scarf, whose hands were seared and scarred—might he call Her Excellency "Ulusia" and go unrebuked. He knew not what to make of it, if he might not say that the Erlachs had been mad through the generations, and that this mistress,

whom he worshipped, was no saner than her ancestors.

"I will prepare a room, Excellency," he said, and that was all.

* * * *

His bedroom was a vast apartment upon the second floor of the Erlach Palace, and from its windows you had a fine view over the Danube to the Prater and the open country.

This had been a guest chamber in the days of Philip, and had been changed but little since his time. Massive furniture was canopied by a ceiling gloriously painted; the bed of gilt had shapely carvings upon its baldachino; the floor was of parquet with fine Eastern rugs. A second apartment disclosed a bath of pure porcelain and a monster basin supported by caryatides—but everything might have been described tersely as "princely," and the word have found its true meaning.

To this room Hans conducted the guest who had come so strangely to the Erlach Palace, and here he bestirred himself to display those talents for which his mistress applauded him. An attempt by the way to address Jura lightly had been answered with such dignity and reserve that he fell to the word "Excellency" as though no other were possible, and began to ask himself what mystery lay behind the visitation and when he would solve it.

"Your Excellency will wish to bathe?" he inquired. Jura bent his head and said that it was his pleasure.

"I fear the water will not be very hot at this hour, Excellency—but if you could wait——"

"It will serve," was the curt reply, and Hans turned the silver taps and set out the towels.

"I will bring your Excellency a sleeping suit," he ran on—"if it amuses your Excellency it is one which has been worn by his lordship, the Bishop of Strepitza."

Jura smiled, but did not rebuke him:

"I will put on sanctity," he said—and the man returned anon with a delicate suit of silk which he laid upon the bed with the gentle fingers of a woman.

"There is brandy in the decanters," he continued, indicating a pair of shapely Venetian bottles upon the bed-table, "your Excellency will find the cigarettes in the silver box beside them. If there is anything further, the bell rings in the room of Albrecht the valet. I wish your Excellency good-night."

Jura thanked him with a word while he cast off his tattered clothing, and threw it from him.

The maze of the dream became more profound each instant; he put out hesitating fingers to touch the fine furniture, the silk curtains, the silver by his bed-side. He had been an ardent smoker always, and he lighted a cigarette and puffed it contemplatively, pouring also a little brandy into a long-stemmed glass and sipping it.

Minute by minute, however, the shame at his own appearance deepened. He spurned the filthy rags at his feet as though degradation came by them. The water delighted him; he dwelt upon the luxury of that wonderful bath, lay long contemplating the scene about him and fearing that it would

vanish from his sight. So sure was this dread that he would not turn out the electric light ; but crept into the vast bed with the glow of twenty lamps upon his eyes and the dawn light breaking over the Prater.

What had come to him ? Whose was the voice which called him out of the mine ?

Was it not the voice of the beautiful woman, the first vision which the world of day had shown to him, the last as he believed that it could show ? And why had this woman stretched out a hand to touch his filthy rags, to call him from the darkness, to fête him thus as though he were a prince ? He answered complacently that all this was done because of the truth—that he was the lord Philip's son and that this was his inheritance. "At the same time his scruples remained. He had dreamed it all and the day would dispel the dream.

Here we find a man unable to sleep ; dozing from hour to hour and then starting up as one who must be vigilant and stand sentinel over this house of enchantment. He feared that sleep would rob him and fought with the dreams. When fatigue overcame him and perforce he must surrender, he lived again the dreadful hours at Pavna, was in the burning Castle, then back to the mines which cried out for him and would not be denied.

This latter was the most curious of all his hallucinations. Despite all that he had seen of the city, long days of a spring sunshine, the glory of valley and of mountain, he could contemplate with equani-

mity his return to Styx and the caves ; could wander as a free man rejoicing in his freedom through the vast halls, the deepest chasms of that world of salt, and find in every one of them some image of the woman who had offered him salvation.

Ulusia, indeed, became the goddess of his achievements rather than the mere mortal whom he loved physically. He worshipped her as a figure above an altar, led her from cave to cave and beheld the transfiguration of all about her. But this was only in his sleep—and directly he awoke the old fears returned, the deeper wonder, the entrancing sense of possession.

It was a sunny morning, the sky wonderfully blue, the houses so purely white that they might have been built of the finest marble. An invigorating breeze swept lightly across the great plain upon which Vienna is built ; rose and stirred the leaves as with a hand of velvet. People who went abroad at that early hour were merry and laughing and told each other that summer was at hand. Jura lying in the vast bed and watching the sunbeams playing above the crimson carpet listened to these sounds as to a revelation. There had been no joy at Rabka—no unfettered merriment, no spontaneous revelation of self and its content. Passions there ran to extremes ; men loved, feared, hated, with all the intensity of human nature—but moderation they did not know. Here in Vienna every one seemed possessed by the *joie de vivre* and went about as though desiring to infect the community

with his own agreeable disease. Jura did not understand it. Did life, then, mean so much to them?

A valet came to him at eight o'clock and brought him tea and fruit. He received them gratefully, but heard with less pleasure the intimation that Her Excellency would expect him in the gardens of the palace in half an hour and that General Wagner, of whom he had heard much, would be with her. The morning light was no friend to the filthy rags he had spurned yesternight, and he told the man as much and begged Her Excellency to excuse him. The answer was an assurance that the difficulty had already been arranged.

"The tailor will be here immediately, Excellency. I will prepare your bath if you so wish."

He bade the man do so, and wrapping himself in a rose-satin dressing-gown, laid already upon his bed, he went to the windows and looked out. Truly this was an enchanting scene—the ripe greens of the park, the splendid white buildings, the sleepy old Danube eddying in the sunshine, the gay equipages, the figures on horseback, the hussars, the foot soldiers. He could hear also the church bells ringing, and their note was more musical than any he remembered.

But chiefly he was conscious of this, that Ulusia herself, just returned from the Prater and still wearing a riding habit in a pretty shade of green, walked upon the terrace below, and that with her was that fine old fellow, General Wagner, who had promised to protect the fugitive from his enemies.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CHURCH MILITANT

BISHOP HEINRICH arrived in Vienna at a quarter past three precisely and drove immediately to General Wagner's quarters at the War Office.

Rarely had this good old man been in such a state of mental and physical distress; rarely had he been at so little pains to hide his trouble.

Admitted to the General's presence immediately, the flood of his pathetic eloquence threatened to engulf him in a torrent of angry declamation. Had the General heard the news? Did he know what was happening at the Erlach Palace? A pretty thing—but one chiefly for the police.

"I have telegraphed already to all concerned," he said when he could get his breath—"Count Rudolph is at Rabka but should be here this afternoon—the Baron Airenthal knows what is happening—the Kaiser must hear. These mines are, in a sense, national property. My niece is but a puppet as the Courts will determine. Do you not see, my dear General, that if this fellow can persuade a sufficient number of people to believe in his claims, our trouble may be endless?"

The General said that he perceived it. A very

cool, calculating old gentleman, with curly white hair and the bluest of eyes, he puffed a cigarette from an amber tube and watched the Bishop almost with amusement.

"It is all very true, my lord," he said, "but just a question before we go any further. What do you believe in, the matter? Are you prepared to swear that the man is an imposter?"

"Of course I am. My brother's child was buried at Rabka. How can this man be his son?"

"Were not stories of the kind told in the mine many years ago?"

"I know it—they were fables. Philip lost his reason when his wife died. He always feared that his brother Feodor would kill the child. It was unreasonable, absurd, a sick's man's hallucination. The child died two years before the father. His grave stands yet—the fire did not destroy it."

"And it has been opened."

"Count Rudolph has seen to that. There is not a shadow of justification for this impossible story."

The General coughed and scattered the ashes from his cigarette lightly upon the carpet.

"Have you seen the man?"

"I may have done so. He was the boatman at Rabka. I have visited the subterranean lake—as other tourists do."

The General nodded his head.

"I advise you to see him," he said shortly.

"Do you mean to say that he resembles my dead brother Philip?"

"I mean to say this—that if you put him in hussar uniform to-morrow, there is not one man in a hundred who could tell you whether he were Philip or his son."

The Bishop sighed ; he had feared it.

"We have that to think of," he admitted reluctantly, "there may have been a—a well—an event of which we know nothing. But, General, you would not propose to hand over the mines at Rabka to my brother's natural son?"

"Ah, there you have it. That far I grant you he is an imposter. But don't you see that the very fact demands fair reparation, a generous allowance, a certain measure of protection ? I tell you, Bishop, that the treatment which this poor fellow has received is a scandal—and a scandal for which you as well as others may be called to account. Beware what you are doing—for you will have society against you."

The Bishop mopped his brow.

"In any case, he cannot stop at the Erlach Palace."

"Why not—is not that the safest place to keep him ? Would you have him telling the story all over the city ?"

"I would have nothing of the kind. There is my niece to consider. Do you not see that their residence under the same roof——"

The General waved the objection aside with a flourish of a fine fat hand.

"He claims to be her cousin. You yourself are

going to the palace and can very well take care of it. Send him abroad and the tongues begin to wag. If there is anything in this story, it is our duty to discover it. Should the man prove to be merely a natural son, then we must provide for him. I have told the Count so, and I remain of the opinion. Remember what society will think of us for sending a poor fellow, who is a kinsman, whatever he is not, to the madhouse at Pavna. I tell you it was a shocking thing, Bishop, and one for which you may yet be called to account——”

“ I—but you do not accuse me of it ? ”

“ Then the silent Rudolph told you nothing ? ”

“ I cannot say that—he made mention of it. I am one of the partners in the Rabka mine ; he could not keep it from me.”

“ The better reason for you to hush it up. Avoid an inquiry and determine upon justice. I can give you no better advice.”

“ There is no justice in self robbery. You forget that my niece is infatuated. Imagine Feodor's daughter stooping to a man who rowed ferry boats for ten crowns a week ! The Count goes so far as to say that she is in love with him. That I cannot believe. There is a limit, surely, to what Ulusia would do ? ”

“ I doubt it. A woman who loves is a democrat in her affections but an autocrat in her acts. If she is determined that this man, her cousin, shall be her husband, I doubt if the Kaiser himself could stop her. You know the race, Bishop. It is a

race which does not aspire to the highest things, but to those it most desires. At the same time I foresee a tragedy and warn you. The fellow worships her but not as she would be worshipped. In her presence he is a priest before the picture of the Madonna, or rather before a vision of the Madonna. She stands to him for heaven and earth, divinity, humanity. But I don't believe he would marry her if she asked him."

The Bishop laughed outright at this.

"My dear General," he exclaimed, "surely we are getting on. Here's a madman from the mines, as I believe him, and already you speak of marriage. Oh, come, come, let us speak as men of common sense."

"I am trying to do so, Bishop. An agent of mine left for Rabka this morning and is searching the records there. The young Englishman has gone to Jajce to find whether the Monk Arthur is alive or dead. I don't think we shall be long in doubt."

"And if nothing is proved?"

"Oh, then he goes—with some reward and our word that he will not be punished."

"But should there be proofs——?"

"In that case the Courts must pronounce upon them. There is no alternative. If we go to the Courts, it will either be fortune or what is very far from fortune for Philip's son. They will certainly condemn him to perpetual imprisonment."

The Bishop was about to say that he hoped it would be so, but catching a certain earnest ex-

pression upon the old soldier's face, he checked himself in time and put another question.

"You have met this young Englishman, Lord Amblehurst?" he asked.

The General said "yes."

"And what do you think of him, General?"

"That he will carry Ulusia to London—unless you mobilize the army to stop him."

"But this infatuation, this insanity——"

The General laughed.

"These things pass," he said, "she is young and her head is full of ideas for which your mine is responsible. Let time do its work. Ours is more dangerous, Bishop, since it concerns both honour and fortune."

The Bishop admitted sadly that it was so; and pleading the urgency of the occasion hastened on to the Erlach Palace. General Wagner watched him from the window, and as the ponderous carriage drove away he followed it with curious eyes.

"Admirable fellow," he said softly to himself—and then: "I wonder if he finds the poor blessed to-day?"

CHAPTER XXIV

THERE IS NEWS FROM JAJCE

SEVEN days had passed since the good Bishop Heinrich came in haste from Strepitza to the Erlach Palace : the morning of the eighth day found Ulusia at her desk in the white boudoir, writing to her friend Lord Amblehurst, and telling him very frankly of much that had happened since he left them.

" My uncle is here," she wrote, " and has added to our burdens. He questions Jura all day and is never tired of being answered. Yesterday he told me that the likeness between father and son was the most wonderful he had known, and when I claimed the admission and tried to hold him to it, his corrections were maladroit.

" I am sure that he believes what we all believe ; while, as for General Wagner, he is with us heart and soul. There remains a hesitation, a vague response which perplexes me, and is illogical. They know the truth and will not admit it—until disclosures shall compel them, if disclosure is to be hoped for. My own faith remains unshaken despite much that might move it. I know that Jura is my cousin and am prepared to uphold the truth everywhere.

"Let me tell you that our task would be easier but for certain difficulties for which we are directly responsible. Jura is very ignorant of the world, childish, pitifully ignorant. We took him to the opera yesterday and he seemed quite unable to understand that the singers played a part and were other than the characters they represented. He was moved as a child might have been who entered such a place for the first time—the music overwhelmed him; I saw the tears running down his face and for pity's sake I took him home. The same ignorance forbids participation in the commonest things of our daily life. He was condemned so long to the darkness that he is never happy until the lamps are lit. Perhaps he understands and resents the price he must pay for the crime that has been committed against him. Here is one born to great riches who has few of the accomplishments, even of the pleasures of his fellows. He cannot ride, he does not fence; he has some knowledge of books, but none of modern literature. His days are spent in recalling the stories of his youth, dreadful stories of the black galleries and of the fearful people who live in them.

"Need I tell you how distressing I find all this? To my distress must be added the doubt of which others make so much. Sooner or later this issue must come before the Courts. Should that happen before you can help us—then I dread to think what the issue may mean to him. But upon one thing I am resolved, and it is this—that he shall enjoy the

heritage which is his, whatever be the verdict of the judges or the intrigues of those who seek their help."

She folded the letter, and directed it to the Right Hon. the Earl of Amblehurst, at the *Hotel Jezero* in the mountain town of Bosnia. The same footman who carried it from the room informed her that His Excellency, General Wagner, waited to see her, and she commanded him to admit the General at once. Premonition told her that he came with fateful news; she could resent the commonplaces with which he greeted her, and the preliminaries concerning the weather, the Court and the opera. It was a relief beyond words when he asked her a question concerning Lord Amblehurst.

"Heard from your young friend at Jajce—eh? Is he still on the war path?"

"I heard from him yesterday. He talked of going on to Mostar."

"Then this wild goose chase is finished. I thought we should come to it. My own people told me so very plainly."

Ulusia lifted her head.

"Your own people, General?"

"Yes, the fellows I sent after him. They told me the game was up. He has learned nothing. The monk died three years ago—you were not misinformed."

She did not flinch from it, did not permit him to see that the news moved her.

"You mean to say that this is now confirmed, as

Lord Amblehurst expected it would be. It remains then to discover the papers which the priest will have left."

General Wagner shook his head; he was very sorry for her and he had a large heart for women.

"I mean, my dear child, that the sooner we recognize the logic of the facts the better. This poor fellow may be all he says he is, but if he lives a hundred years he will never prove it. What, then, are we going to do with him? You can't keep him here—that is certain. If you send him back to the mine——"

"No, no," she exclaimed earnestly, "he shall never go back there, General."

"Then what do you propose to do? How are you going to put a bridle upon busy tongues? I have told lies enough about it, heaven knows. You would not have me make an art of it?"

"What lies have you told, General——"

"Innumerable. To begin with that he is one of the Erlachs from Madrid, the family which emigrated to Spain with Marie Louise. It's a good story and satisfies people. They think he's half Spanish and are waiting to entertain him."

"You should not have done so," she said quietly, "you should have told the truth."

"And hurried the affair into Court, where, if he loses, they will imprison him for life."

She had known of this, but would not admit the knowledge.

"Impossible," she exclaimed, "they could never commit such a wrong."

"They have no alternative. The trustees, headed by your clever friend, the Count, will press for it. I came here to tell you so; I have just seen your uncle—you know he returns to Strepitza to-day——"

"Yes, he will be away three days altogether."

"Well, that's just the grace he gives us—three days. If there is no definite news from Jajce in three days he brings the matter to trial. Its madness—but he says the scandal must be faced. You will be wise to telegraph to Lord Amblehurst if you haven't done so already. But I expect you have done it," he added with a laugh.

She protested that she had written but had not believed the matter urgent enough for a telegram. That omission should be rectified, however. She would see to it at once.

"Since he is doing your duty, General——"

"My duty—please don't say that. I assure you that my agents have been at work night and day since I first heard of it. Am I the man to take my orders from the first roving Englishman who happens to please you?"

"To please me, General——"

"Certainly, and a very good thing too. He's a great man in England—I am pleased he should be your friend."

She would not pursue it. A telegram to Lord Amblehurst was written and dispatched and the General took his leave.

"Of course we are wasting our words," he said as they parted, "nothing ever will be proved. But we owe it to the fellow to do our best. And I am doing mine—I give you my word, I have acted in this matter as though he were my own son."

"Whereas," she said quietly, "he was the son of your oldest friend."

He shook his head and went out slowly. In three days Vienna would tattle of nothing else. Well, it was not of his making and as for the girl——

But the General never did pretend to understand women.

CHAPTER XXV

THE TOWN ABOVE THE CASCADE

LORD AMBLEHURST asked his valet whether the horsemen were still following the carriage, and being answered that they were no longer in sight he settled himself with some content to enjoy the magnificent spectacle the hills were unfolding.

This had been a weary pilgrimage, but surely it drew towards its end. Five consecutive days of travel had carried him from Vienna to the Bosnian frontier and thence to this beautiful city of Jajce which has no rival in all South-Eastern Europe. Vainly had he passed from the gate of one monastery to the guest-house of another. The answer had ever been the same—he would ascertain all he desired to know at Jajce where the Monk Arthur had died. It were idle to waste his time elsewhere.

And now he stood at Jajce's gate and the virgin forests, which had hemmed him in for twelve long hours, opened out to show a majestic green mountain and a white city built upon its sides; and again, as it were pouring from the very gate of the city, a leaping, foaming cascade, which fell sheer a hundred feet and then raced onward to the lake

of Jezero which stands for wonderland in Bosnia.

It had been an odd quest, a strange affair, and the deeper he involved himself in its meshes, the better he liked it—which is another way of saying that he was a true sportsman and that when his friends at the Marlborough had named him the "Admirable Gascoigne," they were perfectly well acquainted both with this side of his character and with others.

Twenty-five years of age, an athlete from his boyhood, who had played racquets for Harrow, won a running blue at Cambridge and managed to satisfy the examiners who pestered him with absurd questions concerning the ancients, he was now making the "grand tour"—as young men make it in our time, with a yacht and a motor-car among his baggage and every embassy in Europe at his command.

This would be to say that it was at the English Embassy in Vienna that he met Ulusia von Erlach and desired from that moment to meet no other. Not her beauty alone, not her youth, certainly no knowledge of her fortune inspired that absolute passion which mastered him and to which he submitted so willingly. For him she stood supreme, divinity of divinities—the mistress of a dignity, of a womanly charm and sweetness beyond anything he had known or imagined. Nor would he have been the "Admirable Gascoigne" if he had not resolved there and then to marry her—and to leave the world to its judgments.

Admittedly things had not begun very well. This story of Rabka and her strange inheritance came upon him as a thunderclap. He heard that she was wealthy beyond any woman in Austria and received the news with equanimity. When she herself told him the story of the tragedy and its sequel, incredulity quickly gave place to astonishment and astonishment to pity. The whole affair, he thought, could be but one of those aberrations of which youth is the victim—but which are dangerous just because youth prompts them. A shrewd guess named sentiment and sympathy as the parents of this morbid abasement. Let the truth be known and the affair would be forgotten in a week.

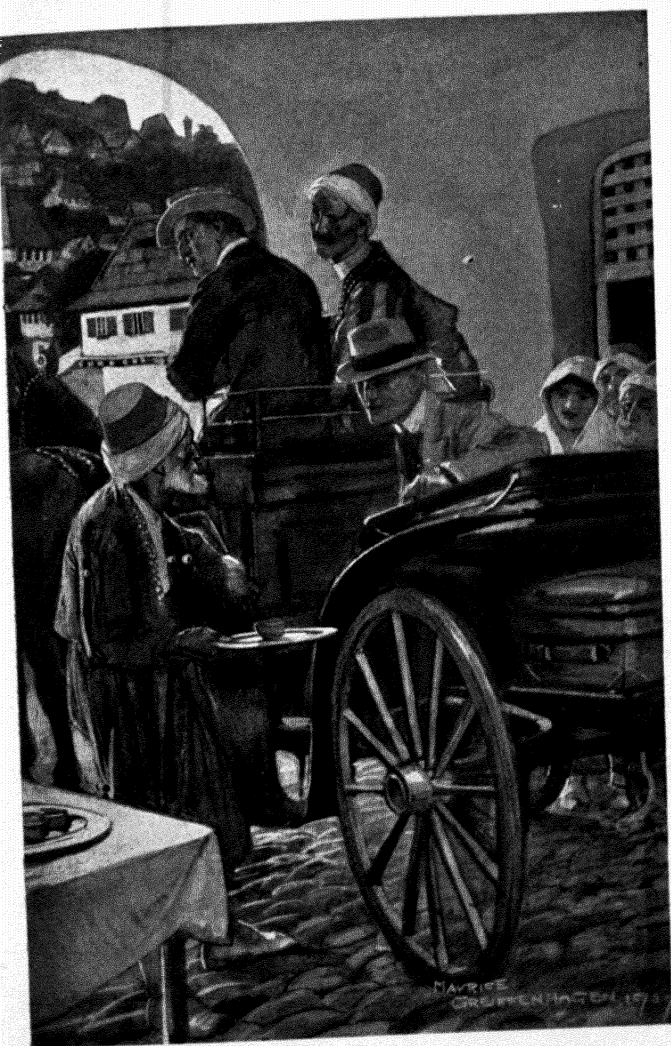
Some such argument as this had been in his head since he quitted Vienna, but it was forgotten at the gate of Jajce where new speculations took its place. For one thing, he was quite sure that he had been followed from the town of Travnik by two plausible ruffians, who had endeavoured to inveigle him, at the inn door, into argument concerning their horses, and had plainly followed him thence upon the high-road to the mountains. Now, however, at dusk they had suddenly disappeared—a fact which the Earl liked less than the other.

“Have the passports ready,” he commanded the valet Edward, when he had reflected that if he were followed to the city, he might very well identify these meddlesome people—and being obeyed immediately the carriage went at a gallop over the bridge which Mahomet the Second built and so to

that ancient gate which none who have passed it is likely to forget.

An old Turk opened to them, and they drove on beneath a narrow arch of the ramparts, which are here tunnelled to form a waiting-room and to harbour a fine old fellow, who keeps a monster coffee pot ever on the boil and offers a cup to every newcomer. The hotel itself, built within twenty paces of the cascade, owes much to a Government which first controlled and then annexed these desirable provinces—and here the busiest of welcomes awaited so distinguished a guest as His Excellency, the Englishman. Bustling maids and a manager in shirt sleeves testified to the pleasant anticipation of guildens on the morrow and lofty patronage. A dinner graced by trout from the river, excellent mutton from the hills and the famous coffee of the true East, surpassed all expectation. Amblehurst readily admitted their qualities, and having lighted a cigar which was not made in Turkey he went out upon the terrace to enjoy the superb beauty of the night and a scene unsurpassed in all the world.

Above him, far above, Jajce's citadel stood out clearly silhouetted against the azure sky. Thence downwards were the twinkling lights of the long white houses, shining as stars against an immense background of the stately mountain. Guest-houses in the Turkish fashion supplied discordant music of reedy organs and plaintive violins. The stream added her cadence; the cascade thundered ever with that melancholy suggestion of eternal combat



"Beneath a narrow arch of the ramparts."

White Walls]

[Page 210

and merciless descent which strikes as a dirge upon the tired ear. The night alone, the night of forest and garden, offered her sweet silence as a tribute of enchanting contrast. For this the Earl was grateful, and strolling away from the hotel he fell to speculation concerning the morrow and the after days when he would return to Ulusia von Erlach.

That nothing profitable could attend his present venture he had been sure from the outset. Had there been any truth in this wild story, eager tongues would have told it long years ago. Nevertheless, a mystery remained and could not but interest him. At the monastery he might or might not be able to unravel it—but in any case he would be able to enjoy the intimacy with Ulusia to which such an embassy gave him the title ; and reflecting upon the possibilities of this, he went to his bedroom in some content and dropped almost immediately into that profound sleep of which youth alone is the master.

A profound sleep truly—and yet not without its dreams. Of these the most real was that wherein he found himself standing as in a vision by the brink of the cataract and watching its eternal waters splaying and whirling in the rocky pool below ; while as he stood there he was conscious of a presence which would have hurled him down headlong. This was so real, his struggle with the unseen assassin so violent, that he started up from his bed to discover a waning night and also to become aware that some one had just quitted his room, while his books and papers lay scattered about the floor

in a pleasant disorder which suggested both haste and curiosity. Had he been up an instant earlier he would have caught the fellow, he thought, for he heard the door click as he awoke and could almost have counted the footsteps in the corridor. As it was he drew the blinds and remained a little while by the open window watching the glorious dawn and the play of sunlight upon the torrent which appeared to fall sheer beneath his very windows.

He was followed then according to the fashion of the East, spied upon already and a marked man. The risks of this embassy had not troubled him suggestively before, but now he began to reckon with and yet to make light of them. If this intruder had been a common thief he would not have troubled about books and papers while so many valuable trinkets lay on the dressing-table. Amblehurst came instantly to the conclusion that those who would perpetuate the existing state of things at Rakba were responsible for this espionage, though how it could serve them he neither knew nor cared. A reader of simple tastes, he remembered with a smile that his library of travel contained nothing more dangerous than a work upon the Carpathians and a few modern novels of repute; while as for his papers they referred largely to the first Spring meeting at Newmarket and its financial consequences.

He did not sleep again after this, but summoning his valet at an early hour ordered the horses immediately while he wrote a brief letter of explana-

THE TOWN ABOVE THE CASCADE 213

tion to the prefect of the city begging him to forego the customary formalities. At eight o'clock he was in the saddle, and an hour later he rode up to the brink of the lake on the far bank of which stands the monastery of Jezero.

His party consisted of his two servants, the guide from the hotel and the ragged escort of soldiers upon which the authorities insisted. The scene surpassed all he had heard of Jajce and its environment, nor did it suggest in any way the momentary foreboding of which he had been conscious. He had but an hour to go to learn whether Ulsia von Erlach were still the mistress of her own house or must make way for another. Thereafter, he would return—though to what reward or hope of this enterprise even his self-assurance might not say.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MONK ARTHUR

A VERY old porter opened the wicket and asked who came. When he heard that an Englishman stood at the door he admitted him immediately.

There never was a monastery more magnificently situated than this. Such had been Amblehurst's first thought when he looked down to the lake gleaming in the sunshine, to the swift running river which fed it and the environment of majestic green mountains and far-stretching forest. Remote and enchanting, it spoke of a mediaeval age—but its priests wore hard bowler hats with their habits and never had he remarked an odder contrast.

"I wish to see your prior," he said to the porter in German, and was answered in the same tongue that His Excellency's message should be delivered at once.

And so to a little waiting-room, chilling and bare, with a picture of the crucifixion upon its walls and a crimson geranium upon a bare wooden table for its one gleam of colour. Here a young priest offered liqueur from a cut-glass bottle—a fiery potion which should have been brewed in the very depths of Hades. Amblehurst conveniently emptied his glass

into the flower pot when the priest's back was turned and asked another question.

"The brother who was called Arthur, is he here, reverence?" But the priest shook his head. He had neither German nor French.

The tongue of the nod and sign is never an inspiring one and frequently becomes ridiculous. Amblehurst, in truth, surrendered the adventure at an early moment and was gazing idly down to the lake when the porter returned and said that the prior awaited them in his cell. This lay across a wide courtyard at whose centre stood a fine stone canopy guarding a monstrously deep well. A few monks, idling with buckets, became very busy at the visitor's approach—they had seen but two Englishmen in twenty years and this Englishman stood to them for all the fabled grandeur of the West. When he had passed into the prior's cell they told each other strange stories of his country, how that women are still bought and sold there as at any slave market, and gold is so abundant that you may pick it up in the very streets. Thus goes our reputation in the mountains of Bosnia; these are the fables they believe.

Amblehurst, meanwhile, found himself in a poor cell on the further side of the courtyard, confronted by a dark-skinned man, apparently of forty years of age, who received him with much dignity and little speech and was plainly disconcerted by his visitor's candour.

"I have come to find out the truth about one of

your brethren," said the Englishman with some bluntness; "he was for many years a missionary in the salt mines at Rabka and was known there as Brother Arthur. You can tell me, prior, whether he be alive or dead."

He put the question with an entire absence of rhodomontade, assumed what nonchalance he could, and yet was aware that he waited for the priest's reply with something more nearly approaching excitement than any emotion of which he had been conscious for some months past. Truly was it impossible to forget what this day might mean to the mistress of the Erlach Palace, whose house and fortune lay trembling in the balance. Amblehurst understood women well enough to hope that his mission might prove a failure.

"I remember Brother Arthur coming to us," the prior said at length, "it was not from Rabka but from Sebenico. I understood he was in the monastery there some three years. Representations from Vienna influenced his journey. He had hoped to return to the mine but our superiors would not permit."

"Being persuaded to that course by those whose interests were in Brother Arthur's keeping. I understand that perfectly. And now, prior, with your permission, I will see Brother Arthur?"

The priest looked up as though his face had been slapped.

"You will see him—but have not they told you——"

"They have told me he is dead. Agreed. But perceive, I have chosen not to believe them—an opinion which is shared by the high authorities at Vienna who are now engaged upon Brother Arthur's affairs."

"I do not understand you, Excellency. What affairs have to do with one of my monks, who is not longer of the world nor interested in worldly matter?"

"They have much to do, prior, since they concern a man's life and a woman's fortune. I come to you as a friendly ambassador—but be sure there will be others less friendly. Should the Courts have reason to suspect that this man is being kept out of the way——"

A flush of blood came to the prior's pale cheeks.

"This is not just to me," he exclaimed sharply, "do you know the brother of whom you are talking? Ah, I perceive that you do not. Please then to postpone your unfavourable judgment of us until some things are explained."

"Then you admit that the brother is alive——"

The prior shrugged his shoulders.

"You shall be the judge of that——" he said quietly.

He was standing now, and the young priest had been summoned to the apartment. Whispering a few words in Bosnian to him, the prior led the way from the cell across the courtyard to a low building thrust out towards the lakeside and entirely surrounded by a wall of stone. The door of this he un-

locked with a massive key and bade Amblehurst to follow him. "This is our infirmary," he said quietly, "I am sorry to say that Brother Arthur has been an inmate of it for the last four years."

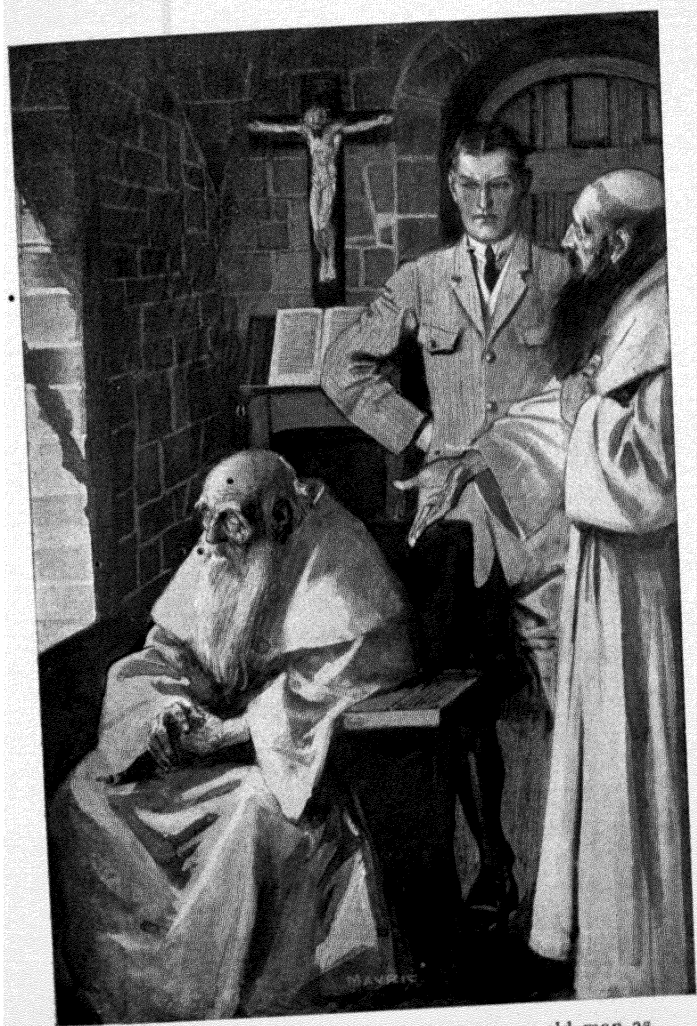
Amblehurst knew not what to reply. Some suspicion of the truth fascinated him and set him to a hundred speculations. Much that had been misunderstood in the story of Jura the Wise became plain in that instant. He could say why this strange claim to the mastership of the mine had lain dormant, why none had heard of it, why Rudolph of Trieste had treated it so contemptuously. The arbiter of fortune dwelt in this house of silence. How if he himself could no longer speak?

They entered a cell, lighted by a narrow window in a wall of grey stone and there the prior turned again to his guest.

"My brother is here," he said in a low voice, "but he is quite blind, Excellency, and a very old man, as you see."

Amblehurst took a step forward and instantly perceived a white-haired old man sitting in a low chair by the window and lifting sightless eyes towards the mountains. The whispered words spoken by the prior did not attract his attention or cause him to turn his head. When he was addressed he stretched out a hand as though to touch that of his questioner but made no other response.

"Will he understand me if I speak in German?" Amblehurst asked. The prior assented with an inclination of the head.



"He is quite blind, Excellency, and a very old man as you see."

White Walls]

[Page 215]

with his own agreeable disease. Jura did not understand it. Did life, then, mean so much to them?

A valet came to him at eight o'clock and brought him tea and fruit. He received them gratefully, but heard with less pleasure the intimation that Her Excellency would expect him in the gardens of the palace in half an hour and that General Wagner, of whom he had heard much, would be with her. The morning light was no friend to the filthy rags he had spurned yesternight, and he told the man as much and begged Her Excellency to excuse him. The answer was an assurance that the difficulty had already been arranged.

"The tailor will be here immediately, Excellency. I will prepare your bath if you so wish."

He bade the man do so, and wrapping himself in a rose-satin dressing-gown, laid already upon his bed, he went to the windows and looked out. Truly this was an enchanting scene—the ripe greens of the park, the splendid white buildings, the sleepy old Danube eddying in the sunshine, the gay equipages, the figures on horseback, the hussars, the foot soldiers. He could hear also the church bells ringing, and their note was more musical than any he remembered.

But chiefly he was conscious of this, that Ulusia herself, just returned from the Prater and still wearing a riding habit in a pretty shade of green, walked upon the terrace below, and that with her was that fine old fellow, General Wagner, who had promised to protect the fugitive from his enemies.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CHURCH MILITANT

BISHOP HEINRICH arrived in Vienna at a quarter past three precisely and drove immediately to General Wagner's quarters at the War Office.

Rarely had this good old man been in such a state of mental and physical distress; rarely had he been at so little pains to hide his trouble.

Admitted to the General's presence immediately, the flood of his pathetic eloquence threatened to engulf him in a torrent of angry declamation. Had the General heard the news? Did he know what was happening at the Erlach Palace? A pretty thing—but one chiefly for the police.

"I have telegraphed already to all concerned," he said when he could get his breath—"Count Rudolph is at Rabka but should be here this afternoon—the Baron Airenthal knows what is happening—the Kaiser must hear. These mines are, in a sense, national property. My niece is but a puppet as the Courts will determine. Do you not see, my dear General, that if this fellow can persuade a sufficient number of people to believe in his claims, our trouble may be endless?"

The General said that he perceived it. A very

cool, calculating old gentleman, with curly white hair and the bluest of eyes, he puffed a cigarette from an amber tube and watched the Bishop almost with amusement.

"It is all very true, my lord," he said, "but just a question before we go any further. What do you believe in, the matter? Are you prepared to swear that the man is an imposter?"

"Of course I am. My brother's child was buried at Rabka. How can this man be his son?"

"Were not stories of the kind told in the mine many years ago?"

"I know it—they were fables. Philip lost his reason when his wife died. He always feared that his brother Feodor would kill the child. It was unreasonable, absurd, a sick's man's hallucination. The child died two years before the father. His grave stands yet—the fire did not destroy it."

"And it has been opened."

"Count Rudolph has seen to that. There is not a shadow of justification for this impossible story."

The General coughed and scattered the ashes from his cigarette lightly upon the carpet.

"Have you seen the man?"

"I may have done so. He was the boatman at Rabka. I have visited the subterranean lake—as other tourists do."

The General nodded his head.

"I advise you to see him," he said shortly.

"Do you mean to say that he resembles my dead brother Philip?"

"I mean to say this—that if you put him in hussar uniform to-morrow, there is not one man in a hundred who could tell you whether he were Philip or his son."

The Bishop sighed ; he had feared it.

"We have that to think of," he admitted reluctantly, "there may have been a—a well—an event of which we know nothing. But, General, you would not propose to hand over the mines at Rabka to my brother's natural son?"

"Ah, there you have it. That far I grant you he is an imposter. But don't you see that the very fact demands fair reparation, a generous allowance, a certain measure of protection ? I tell you, Bishop, that the treatment which this poor fellow has received is a scandal—and a scandal for which you as well as others may be called to account. Beware what you are doing—for you will have society against you."

The Bishop mopped his brow.

"In any case, he cannot stop at the Erlach Palace."

"Why not—is not that the safest place to keep him ? Would you have him telling the story all over the city ?"

"I would have nothing of the kind. There is my niece to consider. Do you not see that their residence under the same roof——"

The General waved the objection aside with a flourish of a fine fat hand.

"He claims to be her cousin. You yourself are

going to the palace and can very well take care of it. Send him abroad and the tongues begin to wag. If there is anything in this story, it is our duty to discover it. Should the man prove to be merely a natural son, then we must provide for him. I have told the Count so, and I remain of the opinion. Remember what society will think of us for sending a poor fellow, who is a kinsman, whatever he is not, to the madhouse at Pavna. I tell you it was a shocking thing, Bishop, and one for which you may yet be called to account——”

“ I—but you do not accuse me of it ? ”

“ Then the silent Rudolph told you nothing ? ”

“ I cannot say that—he made mention of it. I am one of the partners in the Rabka mine ; he could not keep it from me.”

“ The better reason for you to hush it up. Avoid an inquiry and determine upon justice. I can give you no better advice.”

“ There is no justice in self robbery. You forget that my niece is infatuated. Imagine Feodor's daughter stooping to a man who rowed ferry boats for ten crowns a week ! The Count goes so far as to say that she is in love with him. That I cannot believe. There is a limit, surely, to what Ulusia would do ? ”

“ I doubt it. A woman who loves is a democrat in her affections but an autocrat in her acts. If she is determined that this man, her cousin, shall be her husband, I doubt if the Kaiser himself could stop her. You know the race, Bishop. It is a

race which does not aspire to the highest things, but to those it most desires. At the same time I foresee a tragedy and warn you. The fellow worships her but not as she would be worshipped. In her presence he is a priest before the picture of the Madonna, or rather before a vision of the Madonna. She stands to him for heaven and earth, divinity, humanity. But I don't believe he would marry her if she asked him."

The Bishop laughed outright at this.

"My dear General," he exclaimed, "surely we are getting on. Here's a madman from the mines, as I believe him, and already you speak of marriage. Oh, come, come, let us speak as men of common sense."

"I am trying to do so, Bishop. An agent of mine left for Rabka this morning and is searching the records there. The young Englishman has gone to Jajce to find whether the Monk Arthur is alive or dead. I don't think we shall be long in doubt."

"And if nothing is proved?"

"Oh, then he goes—with some reward and our word that he will not be punished."

"But should there be proofs——?"

"In that case the Courts must pronounce upon them. There is no alternative. If we go to the Courts, it will either be fortune or what is very far from fortune for Philip's son. They will certainly condemn him to perpetual imprisonment."

The Bishop was about to say that he hoped it would be so, but catching a certain earnest ex-

pression upon the old soldier's face, he checked himself in time and put another question.

"You have met this young Englishman, Lord Amblehurst?" he asked.

The General said "yes."

"And what do you think of him, General?"

"That he will carry Ulusia to London—unless you mobilize the army to stop him."

"But this infatuation, this insanity——"

The General laughed.

"These things pass," he said, "she is young and her head is full of ideas for which your mine is responsible. Let time do its work. Ours is more dangerous, Bishop, since it concerns both honour and fortune."

The Bishop admitted sadly that it was so; and pleading the urgency of the occasion hastened on to the Erlach Palace. General Wagner watched him from the window, and as the ponderous carriage drove away he followed it with curious eyes.

"Admirable fellow," he said softly to himself—and then: "I wonder if he finds the poor blessed to-day?"

CHAPTER XXIV

THERE IS NEWS FROM JAJCE

SEVEN days had passed since the good Bishop Heinrich came in haste from Strepitza to the Erlach Palace : the morning of the eighth day found Ulusia at her desk in the white boudoir, writing to her friend Lord Amblehurst, and telling him very frankly of much that had happened since he left them.

" My uncle is here," she wrote, " and has added to our burdens. He questions Jura all day and is never tired of being answered. Yesterday he told me that the likeness between father and son was the most wonderful he had known, and when I claimed the admission and tried to hold him to it, his corrections were maladroit.

" I am sure that he believes what we all believe ; while, as for General Wagner, he is with us heart and soul. There remains a hesitation, a vague response which perplexes me, and is illogical. They know the truth and will not admit it—until disclosures shall compel them, if disclosure is to be hoped for. My own faith remains unshaken despite much that might move it. I know that Jura is my cousin and am prepared to uphold the truth everywhere.

"Let me tell you that our task would be easier but for certain difficulties for which we are directly responsible. Jura is very ignorant of the world, childish, pitifully ignorant. We took him to the opera yesterday and he seemed quite unable to understand that the singers played a part and were other than the characters they represented. He was moved as a child might have been who entered such a place for the first time—the music overwhelmed him; I saw the tears running down his face and for pity's sake I took him home. The same ignorance forbids participation in the commonest things of our daily life. He was condemned so long to the darkness that he is never happy until the lamps are lit. Perhaps he understands and resents the price he must pay for the crime that has been committed against him. Here is one born to great riches who has few of the accomplishments, even of the pleasures of his fellows. He cannot ride, he does not fence; he has some knowledge of books, but none of modern literature. His days are spent in recalling the stories of his youth, dreadful stories of the black galleries and of the fearful people who live in them.

"Need I tell you how distressing I find all this? To my distress must be added the doubt of which others make so much. Sooner or later this issue must come before the Courts. Should that happen before you can help us—then I dread to think what the issue may mean to him. But upon one thing I am resolved, and it is this—that he shall enjoy the

heritage which is his, whatever be the verdict of the judges or the intrigues of those who seek their help."

She folded the letter, and directed it to the Right Hon. the Earl of Amblehurst, at the *Hotel Jezero* in the mountain town of Bosnia. The same footman who carried it from the room informed her that His Excellency, General Wagner, waited to see her, and she commanded him to admit the General at once. Premonition told her that he came with fateful news; she could resent the commonplaces with which he greeted her, and the preliminaries concerning the weather, the Court and the opera. It was a relief beyond words when he asked her a question concerning Lord Amblehurst.

"Heard from your young friend at Jajce—eh? Is he still on the war path?"

"I heard from him yesterday. He talked of going on to Mostar."

"Then this wild goose chase is finished. I thought we should come to it. My own people told me so very plainly."

Ulusia lifted her head.

"Your own people, General?"

"Yes, the fellows I sent after him. They told me the game was up. He has learned nothing. The monk died three years ago—you were not misinformed."

She did not flinch from it, did not permit him to see that the news moved her.

"You mean to say that this is now confirmed, as

Lord Amblehurst expected it would be. It remains then to discover the papers which the priest will have left."

General Wagner shook his head; he was very sorry for her and he had a large heart for women.

"I mean, my dear child, that the sooner we recognize the logic of the facts the better. This poor fellow may be all he says he is, but if he lives a hundred years he will never prove it. What, then, are we going to do with him? You can't keep him here—that is certain. If you send him back to the mine——"

"No, no," she exclaimed earnestly, "he shall never go back there, General."

"Then what do you propose to do? How are you going to put a bridle upon busy tongues? I have told lies enough about it, heaven knows. You would not have me make an art of it?"

"What lies have you told, General——"

"Innumerable. To begin with that he is one of the Erlachs from Madrid, the family which emigrated to Spain with Marie Louise. It's a good story and satisfies people. They think he's half Spanish and are waiting to entertain him."

"You should not have done so," she said quietly, "you should have told the truth."

"And hurried the affair into Court, where, if he loses, they will imprison him for life."

She had known of this, but would not admit the knowledge.

"Impossible," she exclaimed, "they could never commit such a wrong."

"They have no alternative. The trustees, headed by your clever friend, the Count, will press for it. I came here to tell you so; I have just seen your uncle—you know he returns to Strepitza to-day——"

"Yes, he will be away three days altogether."

"Well, that's just the grace he gives us—three days. If there is no definite news from Jajce in three days he brings the matter to trial. Its madness—but he says the scandal must be faced. You will be wise to telegraph to Lord Amblehurst if you haven't done so already. But I expect you have done it," he added with a laugh.

She protested that she had written but had not believed the matter urgent enough for a telegram. That omission should be rectified, however. She would see to it at once.

"Since he is doing your duty, General——"

"My duty—please don't say that. I assure you that my agents have been at work night and day since I first heard of it. Am I the man to take my orders from the first roving Englishman who happens to please you?"

"To please me, General——"

"Certainly, and a very good thing too. He's a great man in England—I am pleased he should be your friend."

She would not pursue it. A telegram to Lord Amblehurst was written and dispatched and the General took his leave.

"Of course we are wasting our words," he said as they parted, "nothing ever will be proved. But we owe it to the fellow to do our best. And I am doing mine—I give you my word, I have acted in this matter as though he were my own son."

"Whereas," she said quietly, "he was the son of your oldest friend."

He shook his head and went out slowly. In three days Vienna would tattle of nothing else. Well, it was not of his making and as for the girl——

But the General never did pretend to understand women.

CHAPTER XXV

THE TOWN ABOVE THE CASCADE

LORD AMBLEHURST asked his valet whether the horsemen were still following the carriage, and being answered that they were no longer in sight he settled himself with some content to enjoy the magnificent spectacle the hills were unfolding.

This had been a weary pilgrimage, but surely it drew towards its end. Five consecutive days of travel had carried him from Vienna to the Bosnian frontier and thence to this beautiful city of Jajce which has no rival in all South-Eastern Europe. Vainly had he passed from the gate of one monastery to the guest-house of another. The answer had ever been the same—he would ascertain all he desired to know at Jajce where the Monk Arthur had died. It were idle to waste his time elsewhere.

And now he stood at Jajce's gate and the virgin forests, which had hemmed him in for twelve long hours, opened out to show a majestic green mountain and a white city built upon its sides; and again, as it were pouring from the very gate of the city, a leaping, foaming cascade, which fell sheer a hundred feet and then raced onward to the lake

of Jezero which stands for wonderland in Bosnia.

It had been an odd quest, a strange affair, and the deeper he involved himself in its meshes, the better he liked it—which is another way of saying that he was a true sportsman and that when his friends at the Marlborough had named him the "Admirable Gascoigne," they were perfectly well acquainted both with this side of his character and with others.

Twenty-five years of age, an athlete from his boyhood, who had played racquets for Harrow, won a running blue at Cambridge and managed to satisfy the examiners who pestered him with absurd questions concerning the ancients, he was now making the "grand tour"—as young men make it in our time, with a yacht and a motor-car among his baggage and every embassy in Europe at his command.

This would be to say that it was at the English Embassy in Vienna that he met Ulusia von Erlach and desired from that moment to meet no other. Not her beauty alone, not her youth, certainly no knowledge of her fortune inspired that absolute passion which mastered him and to which he submitted so willingly. For him she stood supreme, divinity of divinities—the mistress of a dignity, of a womanly charm and sweetness beyond anything he had known or imagined. Nor would he have been the "Admirable Gascoigne" if he had not resolved there and then to marry her—and to leave the world to its judgments.

Admittedly things had not begun very well. This story of Rabka and her strange inheritance came upon him as a thunderclap. He heard that she was wealthy beyond any woman in Austria and received the news with equanimity. When she herself told him the story of the tragedy and its sequel, incredulity quickly gave place to astonishment and astonishment to pity. The whole affair, he thought, could be but one of those aberrations of which youth is the victim—but which are dangerous just because youth prompts them. A shrewd guess named sentiment and sympathy as the parents of this morbid abasement. Let the truth be known and the affair would be forgotten in a week.

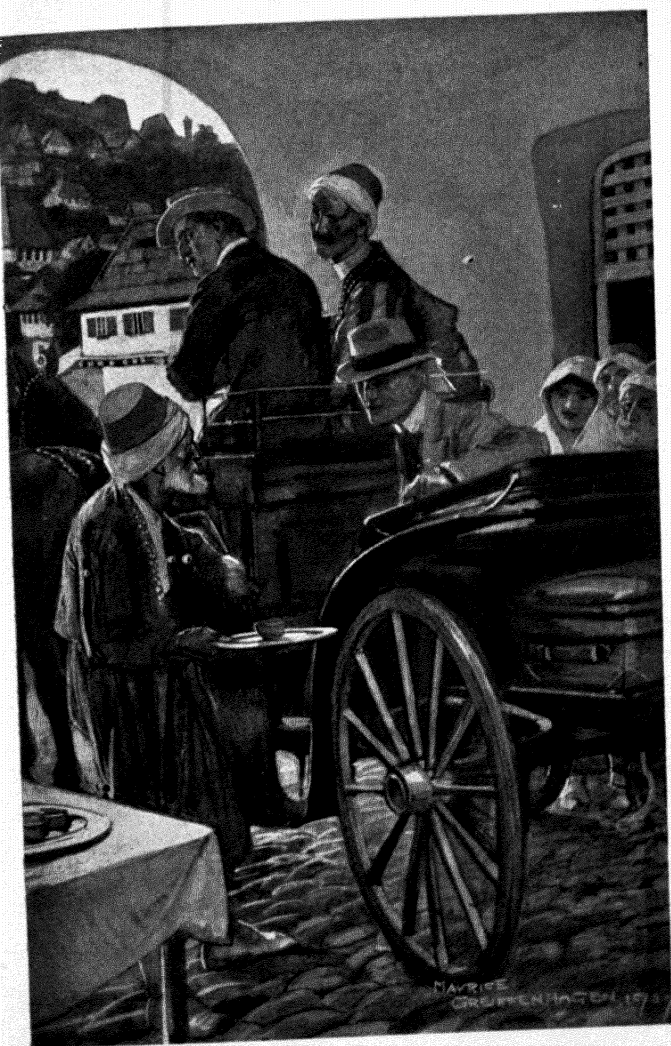
Some such argument as this had been in his head since he quitted Vienna, but it was forgotten at the gate of Jajce where new speculations took its place. For one thing, he was quite sure that he had been followed from the town of Travnik by two plausible ruffians, who had endeavoured to inveigle him, at the inn door, into argument concerning their horses, and had plainly followed him thence upon the high-road to the mountains. Now, however, at dusk they had suddenly disappeared—a fact which the Earl liked less than the other.

"Have the passports ready," he commanded the valet Edward, when he had reflected that if he were followed to the city, he might very well identify these meddlesome people—and being obeyed immediately the carriage went at a gallop over the bridge which Mahomet the Second built and so to

that ancient gate which none who have passed it is likely to forget.

An old Turk opened to them, and they drove on beneath a narrow arch of the ramparts, which are here tunnelled to form a waiting-room and to harbour a fine old fellow, who keeps a monster coffee pot ever on the boil and offers a cup to every newcomer. The hotel itself, built within twenty paces of the cascade, owes much to a Government which first controlled and then annexed these desirable provinces—and here the busiest of welcomes awaited so distinguished a guest as His Excellency, the Englishman. Bustling maids and a manager in shirt sleeves testified to the pleasant anticipation of guildens on the morrow and lofty patronage. A dinner graced by trout from the river, excellent mutton from the hills and the famous coffee of the true East, surpassed all expectation. Amblehurst readily admitted their qualities, and having lighted a cigar which was not made in Turkey he went out upon the terrace to enjoy the superb beauty of the night and a scene unsurpassed in all the world.

Above him, far above, Jajce's citadel stood out clearly silhouetted against the azure sky. Thence downwards were the twinkling lights of the long white houses, shining as stars against an immense background of the stately mountain. Guest-houses in the Turkish fashion supplied discordant music of reedy organs and plaintive violins. The stream added her cadence; the cascade thundered ever with that melancholy suggestion of eternal combat



"Beneath a narrow arch of the ramparts,"

White Walls]

[Page 210

and merciless descent which strikes as a dirge upon the tired ear. The night alone, the night of forest and garden, offered her sweet silence as a tribute of enchanting contrast. For this the Earl was grateful, and strolling away from the hotel he fell to speculation concerning the morrow and the after days when he would return to Ulusia von Erlach.

That nothing profitable could attend his present venture he had been sure from the outset. Had there been any truth in this wild story, eager tongues would have told it long years ago. Nevertheless, a mystery remained and could not but interest him. At the monastery he might or might not be able to unravel it—but in any case he would be able to enjoy the intimacy with Ulusia to which such an embassy gave him the title ; and reflecting upon the possibilities of this, he went to his bedroom in some content and dropped almost immediately into that profound sleep of which youth alone is the master.

A profound sleep truly—and yet not without its dreams. Of these the most real was that wherein he found himself standing as in a vision by the brink of the cataract and watching its eternal waters splaying and whirling in the rocky pool below ; while as he stood there he was conscious of a presence which would have hurled him down headlong. This was so real, his struggle with the unseen assassin so violent, that he started up from his bed to discover a waning night and also to become aware that some one had just quitted his room, while his books and papers lay scattered about the floor

in a pleasant disorder which suggested both haste and curiosity. Had he been up an instant earlier he would have caught the fellow, he thought, for he heard the door click as he awoke and could almost have counted the footsteps in the corridor. As it was he drew the blinds and remained a little while by the open window watching the glorious dawn and the play of sunlight upon the torrent which appeared to fall sheer beneath his very windows.

He was followed then according to the fashion of the East, spied upon already and a marked man. The risks of this embassy had not troubled him suggestively before, but now he began to reckon with and yet to make light of them. If this intruder had been a common thief he would not have troubled about books and papers while so many valuable trinkets lay on the dressing-table. Amblehurst came instantly to the conclusion that those who would perpetuate the existing state of things at Rakba were responsible for this espionage, though how it could serve them he neither knew nor cared. A reader of simple tastes, he remembered with a smile that his library of travel contained nothing more dangerous than a work upon the Carpathians and a few modern novels of repute; while as for his papers they referred largely to the first Spring meeting at Newmarket and its financial consequences.

He did not sleep again after this, but summoning his valet at an early hour ordered the horses immediately while he wrote a brief letter of explana-

THE TOWN ABOVE THE CASCADE 213

tion to the prefect of the city begging him to forego the customary formalities. At eight o'clock he was in the saddle, and an hour later he rode up to the brink of the lake on the far bank of which stands the monastery of Jezero.

His party consisted of his two servants, the guide from the hotel and the ragged escort of soldiers upon which the authorities insisted. The scene surpassed all he had heard of Jajce and its environment, nor did it suggest in any way the momentary foreboding of which he had been conscious. He had but an hour to go to learn whether Ulsia von Erlach were still the mistress of her own house or must make way for another. Thereafter, he would return—though to what reward or hope of this enterprise even his self-assurance might not say.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MONK ARTHUR

A VERY old porter opened the wicket and asked who came. When he heard that an Englishman stood at the door he admitted him immediately.

There never was a monastery more magnificently situated than this. Such had been Amblehurst's first thought when he looked down to the lake gleaming in the sunshine, to the swift running river which fed it and the environment of majestic green mountains and far-stretching forest. Remote and enchanting, it spoke of a mediaeval age—but its priests wore hard bowler hats with their habits and never had he remarked an odder contrast.

"I wish to see your prior," he said to the porter in German, and was answered in the same tongue that His Excellency's message should be delivered at once.

And so to a little waiting-room, chilling and bare, with a picture of the crucifixion upon its walls and a crimson geranium upon a bare wooden table for its one gleam of colour. Here a young priest offered liqueur from a cut-glass bottle—a fiery potion which should have been brewed in the very depths of Hades. Amblehurst conveniently emptied his glass

into the flower pot when the priest's back was turned and asked another question.

"The brother who was called Arthur, is he here, reverence?" But the priest shook his head. He had neither German nor French.

The tongue of the nod and sign is never an inspiring one and frequently becomes ridiculous. Amblehurst, in truth, surrendered the adventure at an early moment and was gazing idly down to the lake when the porter returned and said that the prior awaited them in his cell. This lay across a wide courtyard at whose centre stood a fine stone canopy guarding a monstrously deep well. A few monks, idling with buckets, became very busy at the visitor's approach—they had seen but two Englishmen in twenty years and this Englishman stood to them for all the fabled grandeur of the West. When he had passed into the prior's cell they told each other strange stories of his country, how that women are still bought and sold there as at any slave market, and gold is so abundant that you may pick it up in the very streets. Thus goes our reputation in the mountains of Bosnia; these are the fables they believe.

Amblehurst, meanwhile, found himself in a poor cell on the further side of the courtyard, confronted by a dark-skinned man, apparently of forty years of age, who received him with much dignity and little speech and was plainly disconcerted by his visitor's candour.

"I have come to find out the truth about one of

your brethren," said the Englishman with some bluntness; "he was for many years a missionary in the salt mines at Rabka and was known there as Brother Arthur. You can tell me, prior, whether he be alive or dead."

He put the question with an entire absence of rhodomontade, assumed what nonchalance he could, and yet was aware that he waited for the priest's reply with something more nearly approaching excitement than any emotion of which he had been conscious for some months past. Truly was it impossible to forget what this day might mean to the mistress of the Erlach Palace, whose house and fortune lay trembling in the balance. Amblehurst understood women well enough to hope that his mission might prove a failure.

"I remember Brother Arthur coming to us," the prior said at length, "it was not from Rabka but from Sebenico. I understood he was in the monastery there some three years. Representations from Vienna influenced his journey. He had hoped to return to the mine but our superiors would not permit."

"Being persuaded to that course by those whose interests were in Brother Arthur's keeping. I understand that perfectly. And now, prior, with your permission, I will see Brother Arthur?"

The priest looked up as though his face had been slapped.

"You will see him—but have not they told you——"

"They have told me he is dead. Agreed. But perceive, I have chosen not to believe them—an opinion which is shared by the high authorities at Vienna who are now engaged upon Brother Arthur's affairs."

"I do not understand you, Excellency. What affairs have to do with one of my monks, who is not longer of the world nor interested in worldly matter?"

"They have much to do, prior, since they concern a man's life and a woman's fortune. I come to you as a friendly ambassador—but be sure there will be others less friendly. Should the Courts have reason to suspect that this man is being kept out of the way——"

A flush of blood came to the prior's pale cheeks.

"This is not just to me," he exclaimed sharply, "do you know the brother of whom you are talking? Ah, I perceive that you do not. Please then to postpone your unfavourable judgment of us until some things are explained."

"Then you admit that the brother is alive——"

The prior shrugged his shoulders.

"You shall be the judge of that——" he said quietly.

He was standing now, and the young priest had been summoned to the apartment. Whispering a few words in Bosnian to him, the prior led the way from the cell across the courtyard to a low building thrust out towards the lakeside and entirely surrounded by a wall of stone. The door of this he un-

locked with a massive key and bade Amblehurst to follow him. "This is our infirmary," he said quietly, "I am sorry to say that Brother Arthur has been an inmate of it for the last four years."

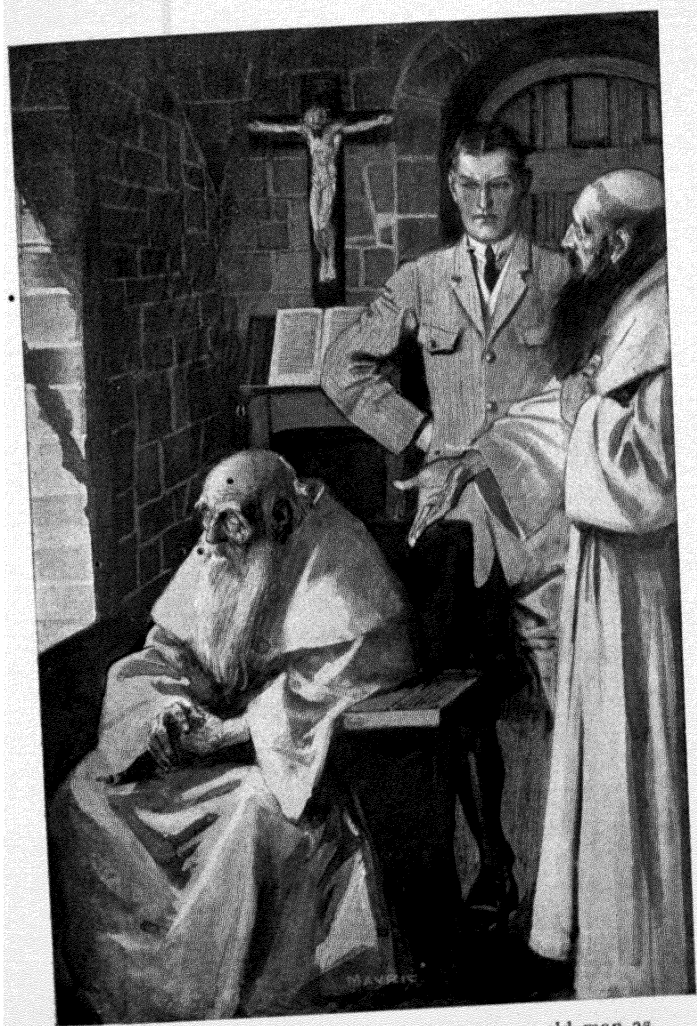
Amblehurst knew not what to reply. Some suspicion of the truth fascinated him and set him to a hundred speculations. Much that had been misunderstood in the story of Jura the Wise became plain in that instant. He could say why this strange claim to the mastership of the mine had lain dormant, why none had heard of it, why Rudolph of Trieste had treated it so contemptuously. The arbiter of fortune dwelt in this house of silence. How if he himself could no longer speak?

They entered a cell, lighted by a narrow window in a wall of grey stone and there the prior turned again to his guest.

"My brother is here," he said in a low voice, "but he is quite blind, Excellency, and a very old man, as you see."

Amblehurst took a step forward and instantly perceived a white-haired old man sitting in a low chair by the window and lifting sightless eyes towards the mountains. The whispered words spoken by the prior did not attract his attention or cause him to turn his head. When he was addressed he stretched out a hand as though to touch that of his questioner but made no other response.

"Will he understand me if I speak in German?" Amblehurst asked. The prior assented with an inclination of the head.



"He is quite blind, Excellency, and a very old man as you see."

White Walls]

[Page 215]

"He used to speak five languages, but his memory has gone with his sight. Do you not understand now why we call him dead to the world? It is the truth, Excellency, and you will do us the justice to make it known in Vienna."

"I shall lose no time in doing so. May I speak with the brother, prior?"

"As your Excellency pleases. Your generosity will spare him should you discover your errand to be useless."

"You may rely upon me—and perhaps my interrogation is to be preferred to that of the lawyers. May I ask you to introduce me?"

The prior smiled.

"I am afraid that is beyond my powers—but I will mention your name, Excellency."

"Mention rather the name of my friend—he is known at Rabka as Jura the Wise."

"Will it be familiar to our brother?"

"I think and hope so."

The prior stepped forward and, speaking in low deep tones of the German language he endeavoured to awaken the blind monk's interest. When some glimmer of recognition showed itself upon a face hitherto expressionless, he withdrew with his assistant and left guest and priest alone. Now, indeed, the wonderful silence of that house fell upon Amblehurst as an omen. He could not even hear a human footstep. Not a sound came down from the mountains; the lake shone in the sunshine as a golden mirror, burnished and unruffled. He might

have been in a house of the dead—alone with the last who had perished in a place of woe. .

It was but a momentary impression and when it had passed a resolution of his vanity prompted him to new zeal in his task and a mastering determination to accomplish it. He must recall this moribund and pathetic figure to life, reanimate it, breathe into it the spirit of forgotten years. Drawing a chair to the old man's side he began to speak in low tones of the mine at Rabka and of its people. He mentioned the name Jura and dwelt upon it. His own recent acquaintance with the amazing story of what Vienna would soon call the "conspiracy" handicapped him sorely. He was a stammerer, but one whose earnestness none could have doubted.

And what was his reward?

The old priest listened patiently to this vehement declamation, though he gave no sign that he comprehended it. From time to time, he put out a hand and stroked that of his interrogator, but the act failed to inspire him to speech, nor would it appear that he was aware even of the subject of the interrogation. In vain Amblehurst repeated the story, uttered the familiar names, spoke of Rabka, and its new mistress. A sigh was his reward. This old man, he said, gazed out upon the mountains as though the very sunshine, which fell upon his withered eyes, would reopen them and give him sight.

For this, then, the Englishman had travelled across Austria to these remote mountains, to

attain a goal, as it were, upon the brink of an open grave and to be mocked by the silence of the living dead. In vain he tried another tongue, recapitulated the story in French and dwelt once more upon its essentials. The old monk still sat and gazed upon the distant mountains nor uttered a single word of recognition. The names, neither of people nor of places, appeared to have meaning for him ; he could be moved by no entreaty, awakened by no ruse. Even the younger man's patience surrendered at last, and believing that nothing was to be gained by any further attempt, he rose to bid the monk farewell—and rising, he heard with new astonishment the old priest's voice for the first time.

“ What is your name, my son ? ”

Amblehurst seated himself instantly.

These simple words fascinated him beyond all expression. He had been understood then after all. The silence had been but a subterfuge. And now the priest would speak. He felt convinced of it.

“ I am called Lord Amblehurst in England.”

“ What do you know of the mine at Rabka ? ”

“ The Countess von Erlach is my friend——”

“ Are you going to marry her ? ”

Shrewd insight. This man hidden from the world for twenty years needed no eyes to spy out the truth.

“ That is my intention, father.”

“ Then a claim to the mine has been set up by another ? ”

"By one who calls himself Jura the Wise and is known as your pupil."

"It is true—he lived in my house for ten years—I called him son."

"While he claims to be the son of the Count Philip."

"It is true—he was the lord Philip's son."

"Have you papers to prove this story?"

"They are here in this room—they have never left my keeping."

"Then you are prepared to come to Vienna and to tell your story?"

The priest made no answer. A sudden flush of blood coloured his cheeks, and his lips quivered.

"I am a very old man, my lord. I have no strength for such a journey."

"But at least you will help us to make the truth known?"

The priest shook his head a little sadly.

"They would not listen to an old man. The day has gone by, my lord—leave me here in peace."

"But, father, you owe it to yourself and to your faith. If you have these papers, they must be given up. You must make an effort to come to Vienna and to tell your story in Court. Do you not understand that if this claim is put forward and fails those who make it will be severely punished? I cannot believe that you would suffer that?"

Again a heavy sigh attended the question.

"No claim should be made, my lord—it will fail. I am an old man and cannot support it. The day

has gone by for that. Let them treat my son well—he deserves it. I cannot hear you further—it would not avail. Leave me, I beg of you.”

“ I will certainly do so, father—but you will permit me to come again ? ”

“ Yes, yes, when I am better come again.”

His hands dropped upon his lap and he sank back as one overwhelmed by the effort. Plainly he would speak no more this day—nor had the duologue been without pain to him. As for the Englishman, his curiosity waxed hot and could hardly be suppressed. He felt as a man who has touched a treasure with his finger tips but to be thrown back by a jest of fate which mocked him. What, in God's name, was the truth ? Why did this old man, who had surely no hope of this world, fear to tell it ?

But this was beyond him to say, and with a brief word of farewell he quitted the cell and the monastery and went out to find his servants.

CHAPTER XXVII

PIETRO RITZI

THE prefect of the city was at the hotel of Jajce when Amblehurst returned there about one o'clock of the day and he hastened to excuse himself for so tardy an appearance.

"My instructions led me to expect your Excellency to-day," he said, "Vienna did not anticipate such dispatch. But anything that I can do for your Excellency, should you desire to see the city or my province, to fish, or to shoot, shall be done. Pray command me as you will."

Amblehurst hastened to assure him that such amusements were, for the time being, at any rate, out of the question. Since secrecy in this affair could help no one, he told the prefect frankly why he had come to Bosnia.

"There is a monk in the monastery of Jezero, who can be of some assistance to my friend, the Countess von Erlach," he said. "I came to see him, but have been greatly disappointed, for he is a very old man and quite blind. Do you know the Benedictines, prefect—have you visited their monastery?"

The prefect, a very fat man of the world, who treated all monks in a spirit of harmless jest, shook his head smilingly.

"While they do not trouble me I do not trouble,

them," he said. "As it chances there is news from Vienna concerning these people to-day, and I am commanded to visit the monastery and to send Brother Arthur to Vienna. So, you see, our purpose is the same. I do not pretend to know the object of these instructions; but your Excellency will understand that I shall carry them out immediately, and that if you desire to see the priest again you must look for him at Vienna and not in Bosnia."

The news did not surprise Amblehurst. It had been patent to him from the beginning that his own mission could achieve little and that the Courts would soon take this burden upon their own shoulders. Perhaps he felt some chagrin at the thought of the poor service he had done Ulusia after all, and the very moderate title it gave him to her gratitude. His own determination was to return to Vienna by the earliest train possible, and to tell her very frankly that the monk's evidence would not establish the claims of her protégé and might finally defeat them. What she would do under such circumstances he could not so much as imagine, but his wit perceived that the ultimate issue lay with the man and that his punishment might be the very worst thing that could happen.

"She will make a martyr of him and devote her life to his story," he thought as he said good-bye to the prefect and went into the hotel for lunch. The train to Travnik started at six o'clock that night, they told him, from the station at Jajce; but he could drive across country if he chose, and catch the

night mail from Serajevo to the capital, a course to which the prefect had advised him, and upon which he decided finally. A great desire to return to Vienna, to hear Ulusia's resolution and to be ready for every emergency rebelled against the remoteness of this beautiful city and its seclusion. He knew that he could not rest until his message were delivered.

Meanwhile there was the interval of waiting, a long interval, since the horses of yesterday were by no means fit for the journey of to-day; nor was it until four of the afternoon that a dishevelled hotel-keeper could supply the necessary substitutes and announce, with a solemn protestation upon the loyalty of his efforts, that the equipages were ready.

As for Amblerhurst he had spent the time alternately between the wonderful terraces above the cascade and the mediaeval street which is Jajce's Corso. Both fascinated him; the street by its impressive suggestion of age and history; the terrace by its superb revelations of natural beauty and the ever changing aspect of the leaping waters upon which it looked. Here upon the brink had he stood last night, and dreamed the dream. He knew not why it was, but standing upon the same spot, alert and surely very wide awake, the Eastern sun beating down upon him, the rocky gorge alive with the play and counterplay of the spreading torrent, the sensations of his sleep returned to him without warning, and all the dread and horror of the dream possessed him once more.

He was there and a hand was outstretched to cast him down headlong. Peering as one fascinated into the depths, he could imagine his body bounding down to the jagged rocks, his flesh torn by the merciless spikes, his bones crushed and broken ere the water engulfed them. What was more wonderful was this, that he, who feared no man, was dumb and helpless in the presence of this unseen peril. He could not stir from the place, could not lift a hand to save himself; but must rock to and fro, sick with fear and yielding to the call of tragedy.

From this trance awakening came with dramatic suddenness—he made a mighty effort, cast the spell off almost with a cry of pain, and turning, discovered that a man stood at his elbow and watched him with eyes so curious and such an odd expression of interest and malice upon his face that no doubt of his will if not of his intention could remain.

“Pardon me, my lord, but that is a dangerous place.”

Amblehurst stepped back from the wall and regarded this man with amazed curiosity. He was one of the two who had attempted to inveigle him into an argument at the hotel at Travnik—a short black-bearded Italian, who smoked a long cigar held between bird-like talons and wore a smile which could have won him a fortune upon any stage of villains. To accuse the fellow of offence were impossible. He had made no overt movement, uttered no threat, had been guilty of no act which could accuse him. And yet Amblehurst could not disabuse himself of

the idea that in another instant he himself would have been hurled headlong to the depths below. Reaction found him almost unnerved. He addressed the man, despite his aversion from strange acquaintance.

"Is my safety anything to you, sir?"

"Pardon me, my lord, it is much. But I see that your lordship forgets me?"

"You were at Travnik yesterday; you wished to speak to me."

"Certainly—to warn your lordship. But I will remind you of another occasion. Three years ago on the Riva della Schiavone at Venice a woman claimed your lordship's protection. Do you remember that?"

Amblehurst looked at him astonished.

"Certainly, I remember a foolish brawl——"

"That woman was my sister. Your lordship owes to the fact another,"—here he flicked off the ash of his cigar and permitted it to fall down the chasm—"that you are talking to me upon this terrace."

"Do you mean——"

"I beg your lordship's pardon. The good fortune is mine. I should have been premature, very premature. Indeed had an accident occurred it would have been a grave error since you can neither help nor hinder us. Your lordship returns to Vienna to-day, I think. Be under no concern, for I also am taking the train from Serajevo."

Amblehurst laughed—the impudence of it amazed him.

"Suppose I have you arrested upon your own confession?"

It was the Italian's turn to be amused.

"Oh!" he said, "but your lordship is anxious to return to Vienna. Would you wait three days in the mountains to accuse a poor devil of an Italian who has just saved your lordship from an ugly accident? I am sure you would not—and Pietro Ritzi is a judge of men, my lord."

"And this judge decides that the object for which I came to the mountains has failed."

"I am sure of it, my lord—has failed so lamentably that in three days the object of it will be a prisoner at Vienna—while the priest who sends him there will have ceased to live."

Amblehurst started back.

"A prophet also it appears. Shall I say a dangerous prophet?"

"Nothing of the kind, my lord. The matter is nothing to me—my work is done; but remember when the time comes and then compliment me. I wish your lordship *bon voyage*."

He lifted his hat ceremoniously and turned back toward the hotel. The Englishman on his part knew not what to make of it. His first thought was to seek out the prefect and relate this adventure; his second to leave the matter where it was.

That violence would be attempted upon the old priest he could not conceive—especially after the emphatic declaration that the claim could not be established. This Italian he set down for a mere

boaster, a pretty tinsel villain who happened to be the brother of the little Italian girl about whom rogues were fighting on the Riva della Schiavone three years ago. His grandiloquent talk deserved no serious notice.

Faith in this conclusion took him from the town of Jajce with a livelier desire to return to Vienna than any he had yet experienced. The wild journey to Travnik he found inexpressibly wearisome—the discomforts of the mountain railway, with its narrow gauge, its snorting locomotive, and the never-ending river valley it followed, appeared almost insupportable. In vain he sought sleep as the train rumbled on through the long hours of the night. When the dawn came, and the sun, full and magnificently red, leaped up above the rim of the mountains, he abandoned the effort to rest and was about to take a book from his bag when the door of his sleeping compartment was opened stealthily—and without any word of explanation the Italian, Pietro Ritzi, entered from the corridor.

“Your pardon, my lord—we shall be at Brod in half an hour. I have something to say before we get there—with your lordship’s permission.”

Amblehurst bade him sit down on the narrow couch and offered him a cigarette. He was no longer afraid of this man, although he suspected his intention. To-day he looked a very harmless little fellow, sere and yellow, after a laborious night, but unfailingly good-humoured.

“This cursed railway is one of Austria’s apologies for annexing Bosnia,” he said with a laugh, “the

representatives of the Powers should be compelled to spend a day in it—I venture to say that would be an end of the Eastern question.”

Amblehurst laughed.

“ You are difficult to please—have you found it so trying a journey ? ”

“ Far from it—it will earn me—let me see—in your money five hundred pounds.”

“ Which you are paid by the Count Rudolph——”

“ Precisely so—an able man, my lord, a very able man. He has made but one mistake in a distinguished career—he did not marry the Countess.”

Amblehurst lifted his brows. •

“ Undoubtedly an oversight. But there is time.”

The Italian leered.

“ True, Her Excellency may not have been willing. I imagine it was so. But, my lord, is it not the greatest achievement in life to marry a woman against her will ? ”

“ Admittedly—but sometimes a little costly. Did you come here to speak about this ? ”

“ Oh, certainly not—I came here to discuss a man in whom you are interested—they call him Jura the Wise at Rabka.”

“ Well ? ”

“ And believe that he is the son of the lord Philip, Her Excellency’s uncle.”

He flicked off the ash from his cigarette and appeared to await a question.

“ When none was put, he continued with equal assurance.

"And they are correct in their belief, my lord, but few would guess the truth."

"Meaning that it is a shameful story?"

"Oh, nothing of the kind—it is a very interesting story, and it is known but to two people. One is the priest at Jezero; he will never tell it. The other is your very faithful servant, who will tell it for a consideration—to you alone, my lord."

Amblehurst smiled. He had dealt with this kind of man before.

"Why do you think I am a purchaser?"

"Because, my lord, the day will come when you will be glad to tell it to Her Excellency, the Countess. Reflect upon it at your leisure. I am to be found at the *Hotel d'Italie* in the Rossauer Kaserne any time your lordship may be pleased to seek me. I think the time will come—when the man is arrested and the priest is dead, my lord."

He waited for no reply, but doffing his hat once more passed out into the corridor and was gone. At the same moment the train entered the frontier station of Brod. Here they were to change into the Vienna express which a monster ferry was to tow across the river Save before it set out upon its swift journey to Buda and the capital.

They would arrive at nightfall, Amblehurst remembered—in time for him to change and visit Ulusia at the palace. But what would be the moment of that meeting or what story he must hear upon his arrival he could not so much as imagine.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ULUSIA IS WARNED

ULUSIA awaited her ambassador in the library of the Erlach Palace, that proud room which gives upon the park and is famous among the libraries of the world for its collection of Italian missals and masterpieces of the Renaissance.

It was a quarter to seven upon a day of early summer and every window stood wide open. She wore a gown of white lace with emeralds about her throat and a fair pink rose which Jura had plucked for her.

These had been dark days for her and the dawn seemed distant. Such a story as the Erlach Palace had to tell could not be kept within its gates and the whole city now noised it abroad.

As ever, when a claim is made to great title and estates, there were bitter partisans. Some declared freely that this was the very romance which the mad lord Philip should have written in the days of his dementia. Others remembered that 'women were ever on the side of impostors—and, recounting similar cases in Germany and England, said that Ulusia von Erlach was not the first who had been deceived.

All realized, however, that the supreme act of

the drama must be played in the Courts which would decide the issue.

If the man were indeed Count Philip's son his claim should be established very readily, if he were not, the sooner the law took him by the heels the better. Mischief enough had been done—while, as for the good taste which left such a fellow at the Erlach Palace, well, the less said about that the better.

Few had seen Jura ; these were impressed and passed on their favourable opinions to others. Certainly he was the living image of the great Philip—but this being admitted, there were reservations of a remarkable nature. The fellow had not the insignia of birth, not the true insignia. Something was lacking to his manner which even his unhappy life could not excuse. Ulusia, they thought, must herself be conscious of this, a deficiency which even her closest friends remarked. Here was a noble if you would, branded with the mark of the bourgeois, curt, domineering, masterful, brave—but not a true Erlach, whose very word would convince. This led them to the obvious story, often repeated and readily believed. The Courts would declare the truth, they prophesied, and shame must attend the recital.

Ulusia had heard much of this talk and she recalled it as she stood at the window of the crimson library and waited for the man who must answer aye or nay.

There had been moments when even she could ask

—is this a truth or a chimera ; am I harbouring the son of my Uncle Philip or an impostor ? ”

Pride trembled at her lack of conviction. She knew that she herself had been compelled to doubt more than once when in Jura's presence. And this by no fault of his, no lack of reverence or devotion, but by that intuition which taught her that Philip's son would have acted otherwise.

She had fought this battle against all the world and these last few days had found her wavering. Combat her scruples as she would they returned with tenfold force now at this moment of the crisis. What would happen, what must she do if the Earl returned ~~with~~ all news she could not foresee. The warnings uttered by the guardians of the mine, the friendly counsels of General Wagner, the anger of Bishop Heinrich were in her mind at this final hour. All would be lost or all won by the Earl's disclosures—nor would her unselfishness stoop to the thought that victory for the man meant instant eclipse for the woman, and loss of all these possessions which the city had envied her.

Lord Amblehurst entered the library just after the clock had struck seven. He had been to his hotel and changed, but she thought that the journey had tired him and her solicitude upon that score betrayed no mere womanly sympathy but something deeper. A quick reader of character, his manner alarmed her, but she did not speak of alarm when she held his hand and thanked him for coming.

"I knew that you would not send me excuses—it is good of you to think of me first."

"Then goodness and compulsion are twin brothers. Why am I in Vienna if it is not to obey you? Of course I came—my news would not wait."

She felt her pulse quicken, knew that her face was aflame and turned it from him when next she spoke.

"My uncle says that the priest will be in Vienna to-morrow. You have seen him; you know whether it is true or false."

"It is quite true. The Court has issued an order and the Prefect of Jajce sends him to Vienna. You will be disappointed, Ulusia—he is very, very old and he is blind."

She uttered a little cry and her face turned deadly pale. "Does he deny that Jura is my cousin? Is he so old that he does not remember that?" she asked almost angrily. In answer he took her hand and led her toward the window.

"I fear it is so. The priest has told me as much, Ulusia. He cannot answer as we wish; he advises Jura not to press the claim."

"Then it is false!"

"He will not say so. That Jura is Philip's son he is ready to affirm—but, as it is better that you should know, he does not think it will help us."

She withdrew her hand from his and sitting at the writing table by the window she hid her face during long minutes of a silence which was pathetic. All the glory of her romance had been eclipsed in that instant, the flight from Rabka's Castle, the days

of seclusion in the mine, the events at Pavna—oh, what a mockery was this, what imposition upon her credulity. And the fault had been her own. She had been so willing to believe—so willing. No doubt had warred upon her faith, no doubt of her own assent from the beginning.

Amblehurst understood this mood, a woman's mood, too well to break in upon it. He did not forbid her to weep, did not seek to lighten her burden. Better that she should reckon with herself now before the tragedy deepened than in the culminating hours.

"What are we to do?" she exclaimed anon, rising as one weary yet determined still to wage the good fight, "how are we to save him, Lord Amblehurst? You know what this means; you know what his enemies will do. Help me, for I am helpless; help me to save my cousin from prison."

He was glad that she had asked him this—glad that she had spoken of help rather than of determination.

"I came here for no other reason," he said, crossing the room and sitting by her. "For this I returned immediately from Jajce. The hours are precious, Ulusia—we have no time to lose. I have told you already that they are bringing the priest to Vienna."

Her eyes flashed; the new significance of this electrified her.

"Who told you this—whose word is it?"

"The Prefect of Jajce; he has his orders; the Courts have issued them."

"Then the truth will be told—to all the world—they mean to shame him publicly?"

"Unless we can prevent it; I have thought of it but am perplexed. Did not this friar swear for years that Jura was Philip's son? What should prevent the same tale being told in Vienna? Frankly, I do not understand him. The man is a priest and he is the author of the story. Will he deny it at the eleventh hour? I cannot believe it."

"But he has denied it already—he has denied it to you."

"I must admit that it is so—and yet I have my own opinions. These lead me to believe that it is not wise for your friend to remain in Vienna."

She started up—afraid to hear from him a truth she had known from the first.

"You are thinking of his arrest?"

"Of nothing else—it may be their shortest road to salvation. Jura should not be in Vienna tomorrow; he should not be in the city."

She came and stood before him and their eyes met upon a determination of their mutual purpose.

"Is your friendship sufficient to answer for this? Will you save him if the priest does not?"

"I will try," he said, and that was all.

* * * * *

A gong summoned them to dinner upon this and they returned to the great saloon to find Jura there and with him the Bishop Heinrich and the Baroness Elwitza. Amblehurst paid her the ex-

pected compliments but had eyes for Jura alone. This son of the mines was a splendid figure truly ; his new clothes sat upon him to perfection ; his dignity of manner was not to be denied. None the less the Earl was conscious of something indefinable, a suggestion of doubt he knew not how to justify, a hesitation prompted perhaps by the events of the recent days. Was it possible, after all, that the story was a shameful one ? The priest had denied it emphatically—and he of all men knew the truth.

They spoke of commonplace things at that gorgeous table—of the coming annexation of the provinces of Bosnia and of Hertzegovina—of possible troubles with the Slavs—the Baroness of the decay of gallantry among the soldiers of the day, who were sadly changed since her time ; the Bishop of French infidelities and the danger of their growth in Vienna.

To the Englishman the talk was tragic in its futility. He knew that this was in truth a house of woe, that the shadow of humiliation lay heavy upon it—that many a hovel in the city could show you happier faces. Above all, the inspired eyes of the “ impostor,” if such he were, magnetized him and were not to be avoided.

Must this poor fellow, the victim of a lying fable, must he spend his days in prison, doomed by destiny for the sins of his fathers ? And the young girl, whose heart had gone out to his romance, must she mourn for him to the end ? He knew not what to think ; his passion for Ulusia was fed by the very

doubt—he saw her already the mistress of Amblerhurst Castle—his wife whom many must worship.

Upon the Englishman, indeed, the burden of the night lay. He must play this tragi-comedy for them all, railing the Baroness, sympathizing with the Bishop, recalling anecdotes that had rusted long ago in London, even speaking of the mines and seeking to move Jura to confession. The latter was the hopeless task—this man whose burning words of eloquence had stirred his comrades many a time and oft, whose scorn had lashed their follies, whose sympathy had won their love—here in this, his father's house was dumb. He could but answer in monosyllables—the past was hidden behind the curtain of his youth and had become meaningless to him.

And so they fell again to the commonplace of daily chatter—and but two remembered that the morrow must be a morrow of crisis when the truth would be known to the city and to the world.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE EARL RESOLVES

THE night was calm and still and a new moon bright in the sky when Ambleshurst quitted the Erlach Palace on foot and entered the wide Hauptstrasse which runs before its gates.

He had made the fineness of the night an excuse for dismissing his coachman, but, in truth, an idea has come to him and would not brook delay.

Listening in the train to the heroics of the Italian, Pietro Ruzi, he had paid little heed to them, but here in Vienna, in face of the crisis, they called for a fairer hearing. He would go, there and then, to the *Hotel d'Italie* and hear what the fellow had to say. If he wasted his money, what matter ; had he not wasted other money in earlier years upon purposes less worthy, and if the rogue were also a cheat at least curiosity would be gratified ?

He watched the carriage out of sight and then turned about to find a cab. The Erlach Palace is fended about its inner courtyard by a monstrous high wall which might be that of a barracks, and by this the Earl was passing when a young girl emerged suddenly from the shadows and, looking intently at him for an instant, passed away into the moonlight and so vanished. Remarking that she was a wonderfully pretty girl and that her eyes were

glorious, Amblehurst lighted his cigar and passed on. He had found a cab in two minutes and in three was being driven, as only the Hungarians can drive a man, to the *Hotel d'Italie* by the Rossauer Kaserne.

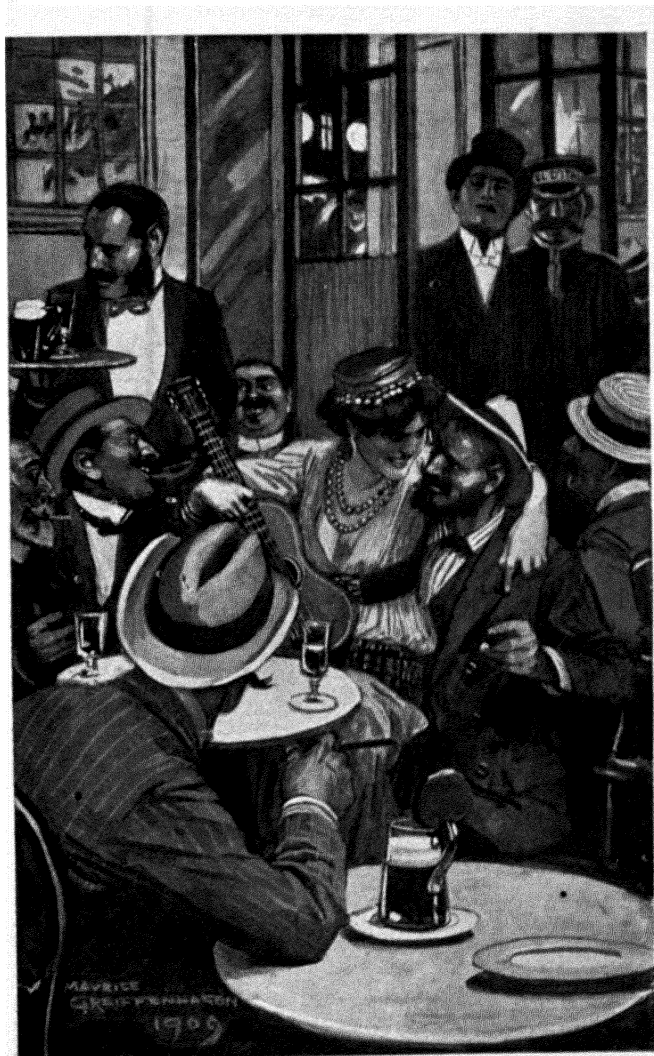
This was a squalid hotel, not far from the Danube—the resort of Italians from Dalmatia and the scum of the Levant. As it befell, there was no need at all to ask for the particular rascal, Pietro Ritzi, for he sat at a little table by the door when the Earl entered, and he nursed upon his knee a gipsy girl from Cattaro, who had just been entertaining the company with a guitar she could not play and a dance which was indescribable.

Uttering a cry of real pleasure the Italian threw her aside upon seeing the Englishman, whom he greeted as though they had been the best of friends.

"I knew your lordship would want me," he said *sotto voce*, "but no names here, upon any account. Come up to my room, my lord, the papers that you require will be there."

He pushed his way through the throng, expecting no response, and led the way up a shabby gilded staircase to a wide landing above. His room gave off from this and was by no means without its luxuries, dirty and faded as the ornaments were. A violent pull upon a crimson bellrope brought a perspiring Italian waiter to the place and then, for the first time, Pietro Ritzi recovered his dashing manner.

"Your lordship will honour me by taking something—oh, yes, they have the English whisky here—but the Chianti is very good, my lord. Shall we



"He sat at a little table by the door when the Englishman entered."

White Walls]

[Page 242

smoke the Bock cigar? I know nothing better in this house and their judgment is not bad."

Amblehurst said that he would smoke a cigar, nor did he refuse the whisky. He judged that formality would not serve him, and he was not displeased to find the Italian in a loquacious mood. When the refreshments had been served and the door firmly closed by Pietro, they sat upon either side of a once splendid marble chimney and immediately fell to talk of the affair.

"Well, am I not a good prophet, my lord?" asked the Italian as he bit off the end of an excellent cigar, "did I not tell you that I had something to sell which you would be very glad to buy?"

"Admittedly, you did—the honours of prophecy are altogether yours, Signor Ritzi, at the moment."

"But why, at the moment, my lord?"

"It is obvious surely. If you have something to sell, I must know what it is. You do not expect me to deal in mere confidences?"

The Italian shrugged his shoulders. "Let us have done with all this," he snapped in a sudden turn of anger quite foreign to his previous manner, "you have come here to buy from me the true story of Count Philip of Rabka and of his son. I am willing to sell it to you because I understand the Englishman and am ready to take his word of honour, and his money. If you give me that, my lord, I will speak quite freely."

Amblehurst reflected.

"And what would my word concern?"

"My own safety ; the means whereby this document fell into your hands. It is quite simple. You were at the monastery of Jezero before me ; they will believe that you persuaded them to give you the paper. Should it be known that I sold it to you—I who was the emissary of Count Rudolph——"

"Count Rudolph, who sent you to Jajce ?"

"I have admitted it. His money is in my pocket. I wish to add yours to it, to be paid to me in London where I go by the morning mail."

"You find Vienna unhealthy in the spring ?"

A gleam of fire shot through Pietro's eyes—but they were laughing again when he replied—

"It is so—an unhealthy climate, Lord Amblehurst. I much prefer your London fogs ; they make identity more difficult."

"Why did you think of me in this matter ?"

"Was it not natural ? I searched the priest's papers, when he was asleep, and found something which Rudolph would burn and, having burned, would send me to prison because I found it. Then I remember that the rich Englishman is seeking what I have found—is it wonderful that I come to him ?"

"I understand you. How much money do you ask for this paper ?"

"A thousand pounds, my lord, to be paid to me in London."

"The paper being valuable ?"

"Am I not putting myself into your hands ? It I cheat you will you pay me ?"

Lord Amblehurst smiled.

"Not a shilling, upon my word of honour."

"Then, my lord, it is a bargain between us. Stay, I will give you the document—and then I will go a little way home with you. There are compatriots of mine so curious that they would look into your very pockets. I will take care that they do not, my lord."

"Oh," said Amblehurst, with a laugh, "I have a cab waiting."

* * * * *

Twelve o'clock was striking when the Englishman left the Rossauer Kaserne, and a quarter past as his cab approached the Erlach Palace. This détour had been a mere idea dictated by a sentiment he would not have confessed. Twice before had he driven thus at a late hour of the night and looked up to the windows of that room wherein Ulusia slept. The very vicinity of the Palace could move him strangely these later days when the shadow of tragedy lay upon it.

There were lights in her window, and willing eyes deceived him with a momentary apparition which quickened his pulse and brought the blood to his cheeks. She was not sleeping then; for her, as for him, there could be no escape from this dominating issue, no finality of the night until the vital words were spoken. He did not doubt that she awaited the morrow as the supreme day of her young life, when illusion must give place to triumph or be shattered in a humiliating débacle of which all Europe would hear.

He had halted a brief moment below her window, but, anon, reflecting upon the folly of such a vigil, he was about to tell the man to drive on to the hotel when, from that very portico he had quitted but two hours ago, he perceived the figure of the white faced girl who had then arrested his attention ; and perceiving it, instantly took a resolution. That she waited for some one within the Erlach Palace, he could not doubt ; and reflecting upon it further, he said she would be one of the women from the mine at Rabka, and that she waited there because of the man Jura.

It was but a guess—he made no claim to infallibility of insight and would afterwards admit that sheer instinct put the thought into his head. As for the girl herself, she lay crouching by the shadows of the portico, her hair dishevelled, her face without a tinge of colour, her whole attitude that of supreme distress. Hunted already by the police, she watched the stranger intently and was about to dart away into the deeper shadows of the archway when the sound of his voice arrested her and she stood motionless, afraid either to retreat or to advance and trembling with agitation.

“ What is your name, girl ; why do you wait here ? ”

“ I am Mathilde, Excellency—the servant to Mother Anna of Rabka.”

“ Then you wait to see her son Jura ? ”

“ Yes, yes, Excellency—I wait to see him—but the servants turn me away. I have waited many days, Excellency—he is in danger and I must speak to him.”

"What do you know of it, girl; who sent you here?"

"The Mother Anna; he is to return to Rabka—we will hide him, Excellency, we will save him from his enemies."

"Have you no lodging in the city, my child?"

"I was robbed of my money. The police sent me back to Rabka, but I left the train and returned. I must speak to Jura, Excellency—oh, such long hours of waiting, and I am so tired, Excellency."

"Get into that cab—I will hear what you have to say as we go. Do not fear, I am an Englishman."

He opened the door, indifferent to the astonishment expressed cynically upon the box and the guffaw which an amused cabman could not suppress. The girl herself appeared to be half dead with fear and hope; she scrambled headlong into the carriage and was trembling still when the Earl followed her.

"What do you know of Herr Jura, girl—I must hear everything?"

"I have known him for many years, Excellency—I was his servant—I worked for him in the mine."

"That is no reason for your being in Vienna."

She answered almost with a moan—

"No, no, not a reason at all, Excellency—but I cannot tell you; I have suffered much and I cannot tell you."

A new thought flashed across the man's mind.

"Is he your lover, Mathilde?"

She buried her face in her hands and wept silently; but she neither admitted nor denied the imputation.

A passing lamp, searching out her figure as they turned from the Hauptstrasse, gave to it a shapely grace of matured beauty, and when next she looked up her eyes shone brightly in the darkness.

"The Mother Anna sent me to warn him, Excellency—the priest has betrayed us—I came to Vienna to tell him so."

"And they refused you admittance to the palace."

"Yes, yes, they would not hear me. I have been there many days; I saw him with her every day, but he has never seen me. He is much changed, Excellency, he is not the Jura we have known; it is wicked to deceive him as the woman has deceived him; he will be 'punished because of her madness and his old friends will never see him again.'"

"What do you mean by saying that the priest has betrayed you?"

She cringed at this, fearful of her own words.

"The Mother Anna knows—I cannot tell you, Excellency—she sent me here when they threatened to take her to the prison."

"They threatened her—do you mean the Count?"

"Yes, yes, the Lord Governor—he knows the truth; he will punish Jura—he has sworn it. But the people would save him, Excellency, for they believe him to be their King."

"And you, yourself—has Jura spoken of love to you?"

She answered him not a word—falling suddenly to silence and to weeping.

The cab had now driven up to the *Hotel Métropole*,

where the difficulties of this quixotic impulse occurred to Amblehurst for the first time, and put him to some embarrassment. These he brushed aside, however, for was not eccentricity ever a travelling Englishman's prerogative ?

" I am going to ask the people at this hotel to take care of you," he said, when the cab stopped, " to-morrow, perhaps, you shall be sent back to Rabka but not unless it is safe for you to go. Your message is in safe keeping ; I, myself, will carry it to the Erlach Palace and will tell them how it came."

" Will you send me alone, Excellency ? "

They were on the pavement then and she had caught him by the sleeve, the paths of her entreaty firing her pale cheeks and lighting her expectant eyes. To Amblehurst the whole affair was as clear as day ; he understood both the mad passion which had sent her upon this journey and the meaning of the warning which the old woman had uttered. Perhaps a new hope followed upon the circumstance, but he would make no promises to Mathilde. " It will be time enough to speak of that to-morrow. I will see you again when I have thought about it. Go to your bed now and sleep—the people here will have my instructions to look after you."

He entered the hotel, Mathilde following upon his heels, and gave his instructions to the astonished porter. This girl, he said, was an old servant of the Erlach Palace—she was to be fed, harboured and, as soon as it was possible on the morrow, to be found new clothes as he would instruct them. To all

of which the yawning official could but respond, "Yes, my lord"—though to himself he said a hundred times that all Englishmen were mad, but that this was the maddest of them all. None the less he dared to wake a housekeeper and to pass on his instructions—and the last that Amblehurst saw of Mathilde was her white face following the porter to the steward's room and the mute surprise and gratitude her eyes expressed.

In another mood it might have amused him to study this phase of surprise a little deeper, to reflect upon the contrast of the mine with its suggestion of the majesty of eternal darkness and this garish house of light and pleasure and tawdry splendours. But, in truth, he gave no thought to it at all—and entering his bedroom and putting on his dressing-gown, he lighted a cigar and sat down to peruse the paper he had purchased at so high a price.

There are few records of mystery in which truth, when ultimately revealed, is not commonplace, nay often ridiculous in its primitive simplicity. When Amblehurst unfolded this tattered manuscript, when he set a lamp near to his chair that he might decipher the ancient writing with greater ease, he could not but dwell a little while upon his own opinions of the case and the conclusion to which they had led him. Had he sought justification for his belief that the man Jura was an impostor, this girl's confession, trapped as it were by the circumstances of the night, would have been his ready excuse. For had she not told him, unwittingly,

that the old woman Anna was privy to the conspiracy in which the priest had been expected to play so bold a part? And was not her very alarm the sure witness to the dangers of exposure which the hours threatened?

By some means, he knew not what, a message had passed across the kingdom from the mountain to distant Rabka and had warned the woman that the house of fables was about to fall. In her turn she had sent the girl Mathilde to Vienna, lacking other messenger; and by this willing instrument of deception the truth had been told.

Told, truly, but in what measure? Was the priest wholly master of the lord Philip's story—or but a lesser actor upon a puny scene? So much the manuscript should tell him, and convinced that it was what it purported to be, a private paper stolen from the cell in the monastery of Jezero, the Earl began to read at last and was still so occupied when the new day dawned.

For had he not promised Ulusia that he would save her cousin Jura if safety were to be purchased at any price, and was not this document his supreme, nay his only hope?

He read it to the last line, and having slept a few brief hours, he summoned his valet and began to dress."

"I am going to the English Embassy," he said, "see that my carriage is ordered at once."

CHAPTER XXX

RUDOLPH OF TRIESTE VISITS THE PALACE

RUDOLPH of Trieste had been more of a hero to his own valet than his fellows, and whatever his solicitude for the inner man, his forethought for the outer was a constant factor of his daily life.

Indeed, he dressed with an actor's regard both for the perfection of the ensemble and the correctness of the detail ; and his bitterest enemy readily conceded him such honours as the tailors had to bestow. They used to tell you at the Erlach Palace that the Kaiser had once asked him what he would do if a speck of mud fell upon his trousers, and he had answered, with pomp and circumstance, that nature knew better than to treat her chosen so ill. And, truly, the speck of mud in question had yet to be discovered by the closest observer and had become the subject of a wager in the clubs.

Now the Count had returned from Rabka in some haste upon the occasion when he is next found with Ulusia von Erlach—but he had been faithful to his reputation ; and even a long night in the ironically named “ express ” had not dimmed the magnificence of his appearance.

A fine frock suit of the palest grey cloth, a hat which outshone the mirrors, wonderful boots with fawn tops, gloves in a pretty shade of primrose, a cane with a head carved of jade, helped him to much satisfaction as he followed the butler to the crimson library and there notified that his business was urgent and that he must see Her Excellency at once.

It was eleven o'clock upon the morning of the day which carried Lord Amblehurst to the Imperial Palace—a day momentous beyond any in the story of this house and of its people. None, however, would have judged as much by Rudolph's manner or imagined any other purpose than that of the commonest convention. [Humming softly to himself, he searched the room and the writing desks with quick eyes, peered into the garden, toyed with a gold cigarette case, and finally dropped impatiently into an armchair, there to exclaim upon woman's love of procrastination and her intolerable delays.

Such was the man and such the mood when Ulusia entered the room five minutes later, and stood amazed to be confronted by so unexpected an intruder. Had not she forbidden him the palace since the night of the insult and might she not well exclaim upon the effrontery which could support his return?

As it chanced both surprise and displeasure were lost upon the Count, who, ignoring them, stood smiling and bowing, as though they had parted the best of friends and had met again to their mutual satisfaction.

"I gave you five minutes—you come in five," he exclaimed, with a flourish of the hat as though to mark triumph; "that is real charity—upon such an occasion."

She looked at him with quick eyes.

"Why do you return to my house, Count—are you not aware——"

"My dear child, we are too old friends for that. Things are said at unpleasant moments which friendship must hasten to forget. Behold me in ashes——"

She smiled in spite of herself.

"Oh, please," she exclaimed—and then her eager curiosity mastering her, she bade him sit.

"Have you come to speak to me of my cousin Jura?"

He waived the claim aside with an airy gesture.

"We are here to talk as brother and sister, I claim the privilege; it is my title. Let nothing apologize for frankness at such a time. I left Rabka the moment I heard the truth—I doubt not you expected me."

"Indeed no—since the truth has yet to be told me."

He assumed a look of bland incredulity.

"They have not told you that the Government has come to a decision?"

She shook her head, afraid to speak.

"But, my dear child, you should have been the first to hear it—they are to arrest him to-night; directly the priest has confessed."

"Why do they wait for the priest, Count?"

"In the interests of us all. What he has to tell is better told in this house than in the Courts. I have seen General Wagner and we assent to their proposal. If the priest makes a clean breast of it and the man hears him, he may be willing to do likewise. Then it would be an easy affair. We shall offer the fellow an alternative, either a trial with its consequences, or banishment to the islands. He will choose the latter, of course. There is a class of adventurer which knows when it is beaten and your friend Jura belongs to it. I have not a doubt as to his decision. He will go to the islands and we shall allow him a pension of a thousand guldens. Would he not be a madman to compel us to make this scandal public?"

The Count was very pleased by his own statement which terminated in a chuckle of satisfaction and an attitude which spoke of a mind at ease. Oh, it was all done with—but it had been an ugly nightmare and it had frightened him very much for a season. Now, however, he saw the end of it, his own sovereignty established at Rabka and this masterful little lady given over to the pleasures of Vienna and of such a portion of her fortune as must decently be paid to her. Rudolph was almost consoled in that moment for the failure of his fuller purpose of matrimony. They would never have agreed—and to quarrel with a woman, he remembered, is to quarrel with the two-edged sword of exasperation and futility.

"Yes," he repeated, "we have planned it all out

and the rest is with your friend. I am sorry for you, Countess—for your faith has been generous. These fables naturally appeal to women. The man told a plausible story and you imagined the rest. Very well, we shall take the consequences upon ourselves."

"But Count, if he refuse your alternative?"

She had been pacing the room; but now she came and stood before him and the expression upon her face was one which boded no good to his plans.

He perceived the trend of affairs at once and his tone changed.

"In that case, my dear lady, he will be tried immediately, and his sentence will be——"

He paused, and looked up at her.

"You must remember," he said, his eyes averted from hers, "that the affair of the Castle has yet to be tried. There were men murdered at Rabka that night and your father's house was burned. Can you blame authority if it lays those crimes at this man's door? Would you be surprised if the sentence were—well, the uttermost penalty?"

"And that, Count?"

"Is death."

Ulusia well understood that her face betrayed her, but she determined that her voice should not.

"You are going very fast, Count Rudolph. Have you asked yourself what would happen if the priest does not speak as you wish?"

He laughed.

"Oh, in that case, we shall try the pair of them.

It is quite understood—I have just seen the General."

"Then why do you come to me."

"Why does a man go to a woman—to ask one of two things, her help or her love. I seek both, my dear child, but the first-named is in my mind at this moment. You are the man's friend and he will listen to you. Tell him to go to the islands. If you would save him, point out that the alternative is—well, what I have named. They will not give him a second chance. Let him go before to-morrow is old. I think you owe it to him to say as much. Now does not your Excellency agree with that?"

He rose upon the words and stood before her, prim and vaunting and very full of his achievement. This mad affair might not be a bad thing for Rudolph after all—there was that in the Count's mind when he put the question. Nor was he in any way disappointed by her considered response—she could not have answered differently.

"I will speak to Jura and to my friends," she said.

He raised his brows.

"To your friend Lord Amblehurst? By all means do so. I am told that the British people are generous—when asked for advice. Consult your English friend and do not delay. The hours are precious."

"Oh," she cried, her anger prevailing, "I will choose my own time."

The outburst did not displease him. His point had been gained, the glove thrown down. She would

speaking to her friends, and they would tell her that the hours of the madness were done with, the fable outlived, the truth made known. Henceforth he, Rudolph, would be master at Rabka, and for that his whole life had been lived.

"As you please, Countess," he said, drawing on his gloves and taking up his hat. "I shall now go to General Wagner and tell him what has been decided. If you prefer that the priest should go to his house——"

"Oh, no, no," she exclaimed, "he must come here; I will believe nothing until I hear him."

"Then that shall be at ten o'clock to-night—one hour after the train arrives from Brod. Until then, my respects, Countess."

* * * * *

She heard the door close behind him and for a little while did not change her position, but stood in a deep reverie as though she still debated the Count's words. At last she appeared to arrive at a resolution and passing out slowly into the garden, she discovered Jura there and called him to her. He came obedient as ever to her summons—the figure of a man moving in a world of dreams and never to be awakened from them. The book he carried in his hand spoke of men and deeds beyond his comprehension; he knew that a long night of sovereignty had ended in this debasement, and that henceforth another must occupy the throne from which he had been cast down.

They had been wonderful weeks, such, perhaps,

as no other has lived or will live. Though the dawn of the day no longer claimed an ecstasy of delight, and the hour of sunset was not accompanied by fear, the greater world remained to him a profound mystery of which his untutored intelligence could grasp no intelligible idea.

Years of labour in the mine had taught him that he was not as other men. Whispered fables, the Mother Anna's gospel, and the homage of his fellow men had built that superstructure of imagined right which this city of Vienna demolished beyond all hope.

He knew now that he was not fit to take that place to which his heritage had called him. All the talk he heard, the interests and recreations of men, the strife for honours and riches, had no meaning for one to whom a handful of fruit had been a banquet, a draught of red wine a potion for the gods.

Jura listened and his heart shrank. What title had he to call these nobles brethren, or to range himself in their ranks? The dominion he waged in the mine had been a true dominion. None there was so clever as he to direct the great army of slaves, or to command it; none was so truly master of gorge and chasm. But here in the realms of light and sunshine—ay, here he was still a child and the world did well to mock him.

He had striven hard, remembering often the mother's words and saying, "I am the lord Philip's son and this is my heritage." His gratitude to Ulusia, the homage he had paid her remained among

the surest emotions which afflicted him—but their nature had changed, so that he began to shrink from her also, believing that he was not worthy and finding personal humiliation in her patronage. True it is that the man in him would recall the golden hours when first he had known her divinity and set it above all thoughts of her womanhood ; but he began to be ashamed of those very victories in the end, and to deplore them. What title had he whom the darkness spurned to dwell in her house and permit her to call him cousin ? Did not the servants deride him ; the very lacqueys show their contempt ? And he was powerless to defend himself ; his crown was of straw and the gold had turned already to ashes in his hand.

He came obedient to Ulusia's call and followed her into the library, whither she returned. Unaccustomed to study woman's moods, her manner, nevertheless, gave him some index to her agitated thoughts ; and he understood that this was not a common hour. Some evil had entered into the house and she was here to speak of it—she who would not hear of evil hitherto, but only of hope and of her abiding faith.

" Jura," she asked, " has any one spoken to you of your old teacher, Father Arthur ? "

He answered, but with emotion—

" Why should they speak—of the dead ? "

She came close to him and put her hand upon his arm.

" No, no," she said, " my friend Lord Amble-

hurst has discovered the truth. Father Arthur is alive and well—he lives at Jajce in the mountains. He is coming here to-night, Jura."

A cold sweat burst out upon the man's face; he began to tremble violently.

"How long have you known this, Ulusia?"

"I heard it some days ago—but I feared to tell you lest it should not be true. But now I know, and so I wish to prepare you, for surely you understand what this may mean to us?"

He turned from her and stood a little while by the open window. Presently he said—

"I am glad that he should come, Ulusia. I am glad that all should know the truth; but for you I am sorry. To us it will make no difference, however—you will continue to live here in this place as though nothing had happened; I shall go out into the world, as a child who seeks knowledge. But you will always be my dear kinswoman, who first taught me that the sun shines upon the earth and that men live because of its light. Yes, yes, it will make no difference to you; but to me it must mean everything. I am glad that the people should know."

She sighed deeply, and went and stood beside him. It may be that she was afraid of the violent thoughts, half passionate, half of despair, which agitated her and obscured the whole truth. To Ulusia this was an hour of some stupendous tragedy which must wreck a man's life, and leave a woman to be a scorn of her unselfish faith. And it was

tragedy inevitable—nothing could turn the course of it.

“Jura,” she exclaimed, “are you quite certain that Father Arthur will say what you wish?”

“Am I certain?”—he looked her full in the face, his eyes expressing both reproach and wonder—“am I certain that I live, that you are beside me? Did he not teach me so from my earliest years—that I had a great destiny to fulfil, that my place was in the world? If I did not understand him, it was because the darkness would not let me read the riddle aright. But now I know, and am glad that he should come. It is your reward and mine—the truth made known, our justification for what we have done.”

And then he said very solemnly—

“I believe it to be the judgment of God that this should happen, Ulusia—I read in it the answer to my prayer.”

She knew not how to answer him: such faith appalled her. And yet she must tell him.

“I hope that it may be so, Jura,” she exclaimed earnestly, “whatever may happen my own opinion remains unchanged. You are my kinsman, and this house and its fortunes are your heritage. Whatever the priest may say——”

His eyes flashed.

“The priest will tell the truth—is he not coming for that? Why do you speak of it?”

“Because Lord Amblehurst warns me to do so.”

“He warns you?”

"Yes, yes, he has seen Father Arthur in the monastery at Jezero—he is a very old man and blind. Lord Amblehurst warns me that he will not help us."

He reeled as from a blow. Her evasions had not deceived him. The priest had spoken and had denied him. He knew it by the sure instinct of despair which is infallible. The man who had been as a father to him, who had taught him to see the light in the blackness of the mine, who had preached each day the gospel of his destiny—this man had denied him.

"Tell me all," he exclaimed in a low voice, "keep nothing from me."

She laid her hand upon his arm.

"You must leave Vienna, Jura—the hours are precious. You must go to-night when you have seen Father Arthur. I will help you—I will go with you if you wish it. Is not my fortune yours; is not this house your heritage? I know it and cannot suffer a wrong to be done. Jura, I will go where you will. The world is open to us. We will make a new home in another country—we will forget these days of trial. It has been in my mind to speak to you of this since I had the news from Jezero; but I waited until Lord Amblehurst should return. Jura, do you understand me—I will go with you if you ask me?"

He uttered a loud cry as though her words tortured him—and reeling out into the garden, he cried as he went—

"I will see the priest; I will force him to confess."

CHAPTER XXXI

THE END OF THE DAY

THERE is, beyond the outer hall of the Erlach Palace, a famous octagon, built in the French fashion and panelled with the fine woods and silks of the East.

Of the eight doors of this interesting apartment, one gives upon the great saloon wherein Count Philip von Erlach housed his collection of Italian pictures for which the palace has long been famous. Other arches give access to the State dining-room upon the left hand, and the private apartments upon the right, near which is a stately organ with "echo" pipes in the gallery above.

There is nothing in all Vienna quite so beautiful as this octagon nor so justly esteemed by connoisseurs; who permit its profusion of decoration for the sake of its originality of conception and suffer its wealth of ornament as a just addition to a structural effect such as few architects have achieved.

In this famous room, upon the evening of the day which should bring the Benedictine monk to Vienna, Ulusia sat at her writing table, busily employed upon a letter which engrossed her attention and forbade her even to notice the passing of the hours.

Above her a profusion of wax candles had been lighted in the cut-glass chandeliers which Count

Philip brought from Murano, the door leading to the great saloon stood opened and showed other candelabra bearing a burden of lights and a profusion of pink roses in sharp contrast with the blue silk of the panelling. It was a quarter to ten o'clock and absolute silence prevailed in the palace. Indeed, so profound was this, that when a bell rang sonorously from the outer hall, the girl uttered an exclamation which was almost a cry and instantly stood to see who came.

"His Excellency, the Earl of Amblehurst."

The Earl had dined at his hotel and come straight on to the palace according to his promise. Accustomed as Ulusia was to the glittering uniforms which thronged her salons this plain evening dress with the unadorned white waistcoat seemed to her to mark a man apart, and to suggest that association of youth, wisdom and manliness which were the Earl's just attributes. That she might trust the Englishman with her most intimate thoughts she had known from the beginning. But to-night she began to understand that he was the one friend whom her riches had won for her.

"It is a quarter to ten," he said as he took her hand and held it for a moment in his own. "I have sent down to the station and they tell me that the express should arrive punctually, so I came at once. If there is anything you wish to say to me while we are alone——"

"There is much," she interrupted—nor could he forbear to notice the restraint of her manner and

the difficulties which embarrassed her—"there is very much though how I shall say it I do not know. In the first place Jura has been told."

He was surprised at this.

"He has been told that the priest will repudiate him?"

"Yes, I thought it better that he should be warned. Count Rudolph was here this morning and put the alternative to me. They will permit him to leave the country, but if he refuses they will arrest him."

"Ah, 'they will'—observe the significance of this. 'They'—these people whose only interest is their own, 'they' are to be the arbiters. Well, I think we may qualify that. Did they speak of authority?"

"Their own. My friendship is to be shown by compliance. If Jura goes they will do nothing. They say that it is for the honour of our house—the honour which begins in this dishonour."

He mused upon it a little while—for, in truth this had been among his own ideas.

"We must be just to them," he said anon, "I think they are wise in studying your interests as well as those of the man. But I do not say that this is the fairest way."

"No, no," she said earnestly, "it cannot be. Our duty is the truth; we cannot escape from it. We must know the truth. It will then be ours to decide."

"Then you still hope that the priest will help us?"

"I know not what to hope. My own faith is unshaken. Jura is my cousin—he has been robbed

of his inheritance. It is my duty to restore it. If he asks me, I will follow him into banishment ; I will give my whole life to undo the wrong that has been done. Call it madness, folly, quixotic impulse—I do not care. He is my kinsman and I will be faithful to him."

The Englishman did not reply immediately. He had quite expected some supreme sacrifice upon her part, but he was not prepared for this fashion of it. It may be that her candour inspired him anew to greater confidence. This was not a confession from the heart ; these were not the words of a woman who loved. He perceived that the victory had been won over her pity and that pity now dictated this abandonment.

"It is a noble thought," he admitted presently, "but I am still doubtful. I would say no word to deter you if I were sure that this is the best way of helping you cousin. But reflect—you would sacrifice your own fortune by such an act. These mines are a national trust. The Government draws many thousands a year from them. There would be Government intervention, the Emperor's intervention as against an adventurer. It is evident to me that your cousin has no pleasure of life as he is. Are you sure that he would be happier in another country ? It may be so—but are not your friends permitted to doubt ?"

"They may doubt when they speak of him as an adventurer. I did not expect that from you."

"But I am merely the *advocatus diabolicus*—

I speak as society will speak. There is no *via media*. He is either the man or an impostor ; and as one or the other he will be judged. The world rarely discusses any man's history unless it is disgraceful. Our past becomes important only when our present is in the newspapers. You must be prepared for this when the priest has spoken."

" Oh," she exclaimed, rising impatiently as though delay were intolerable, " I need no preparation—I ask but the truth. Jura knows the alternative and I believe that he will accept it. If he does, I shall go with him—my resolve is firm and nothing will shake it ; I shall follow him until we discover the Eldorado which does not punish for the sins of the fathers and brands no honest man with infamy for a crime committed by others against his childhood. That is my resolution and this letter bears witness to it. If you are in Vienna, I charge you to make it public. There is no other who may be willing to defend my name ; none who so well understands me. To you, then——"

She ceased to speak, hearing a sound in the ante-room, but he took the letter swiftly from her hand and at the same moment her cousin entered the room softly and bowed with simple dignity to the guest whose friendship he understood. Clad like Lord Amblehurst in plain evening dress which sat ill upon his massive figure, an observer might have remarked that his likeness to the great Count Philip had surrendered some of its fidelity in these days of doubt and hazard and that Jura of the mine was not

the Jura of the Erlach Palace. With it all, a certain majesty remained and a power of the wonderful eyes which might have magnetized the least sensitive.

He crossed to Ulusia's side—and she, taking a pink rose from a vase, handed it to him with a pretty smile. No stranger would have guessed by their commonplace talk that this was the hour of finality, the hour when all should be won or lost by one man's decree and a verdict pronounced which should send a new lord to Rabka or condemn a felon to lifelong imprisonment. Yet such it was and as the coming minutes were to write it in the story of Philip von Erlach and of his house.

A bell reverberated in the corridor and Count Rudolph entered. He wore a green uniform of a Gallician regiment and carried a hussar's busby in his hand. His manner was less arrogant than of yore and seemed coloured by no little anxiety. In truth he asked himself as he entered if the priest would keep faith with him or recant even at this the eleventh hour. To Ulusia he paid an unusual compliment—

“Your octagon was never so beautiful,” he said quietly; “I shall remember that pink roses are your emblem.”

She answered that all flowers were her emblem and turned to Lord Amblehurst as though in mute appeal. He, however, was diverted already by the Count's sudden reference to Bosnia and the benefits which had come to it by Austria's suzerainty; and while the two discussed it Ulusia went over to Jura's side and began to speak very earnestly to him,

but in so low a tone that even Rudolph's suspicions could make nothing of her confidence. In this way five minutes were numbered. It was exactly three minutes past ten when a footman opened the middle door of the octagon and announced the Prior of Jezero and the Brother Arthur—and from that instant the very ticking of the clocks was a loud sound in the room.

They came in together, the younger man supporting the blind monk and waiting upon his halting steps. Behind them walked the Prefect of Jajce in his uniform, and with him the Chief of the Police of the city—and these in their turn were followed by General Wagner, the Notary Public and the lawyer Kreisner, who had represented the house of von Erlach since Count Philip's death. When all had entered and the servant had withdrawn, a circle was formed about the spacious apartment and the other doors were closed. It was natural that the chief seat should be accorded to the blind monk, and to this General Wagner led him with some solicitude, arranging the cushions deliberately and begging him to rest a little while before he spoke. The others stood round about waiting for some leader to put them at their ease. They understood that a tense moment was upon them and would not hasten it.

Jura the Wise had been standing by Ulusia's side when the monk entered, and now he rested immobile, as though his mind were held in trance by some re-birth of outlived years and all the present scene blotted out. Gazing earnestly at the old man's

face, his own lost, as it were, the stamp of years and became almost that of a boy. Many emotions swayed him, but chiefly the emotion of a vivid memory which transported him in an instant from this house of riches to the very depths of Rabka's mine, sent him again as a savage of cave and river; rebuilt a house in the darkness and heard there a teacher's voice. But a whisper at first; the voice gained strength each moment until its persistent summons overpowered his will, and with a loud cry of "Father" he stretched out his arms as though to ask a blessing.

"Father, do you not know me; I am Jura whom you called son—do you not know me?"

The monk caught the outstretched hand and pressed it in his own. Feeling the upturned face, stroking the hair, listening eagerly to the passionate entreaty, his features relaxed and fear passed from them.

"You are my son, Jura—yes, yes, how could I deny you—you are my son and I give thanks to God for bringing you to me again."

A curtain, as it were, of the darkness of Rabka dropped for an instant before Jura's eyes, and he swayed and rocked beneath the hand which cherished him. Oh, if he could but cry aloud before them all, utter that supreme protest upon the wrong which had been done him; compel the truth in one mighty sentence which should justify him utterly. But the words failed him; he tried to speak and his dry lips uttered no sound. And then he heard General Wagner's voice and his heart

seemed to stand still while the response was uttered.

"You know why we have sent for you, Father?"

"Yes, yes, I am a very old man and I cannot help you."

"It is necessary in the interests of justice that you tell us what you know. You educated a child, in the mine at Rábka—whose son was he?"

"He was the son of the lord Philip."

"And his mother?"

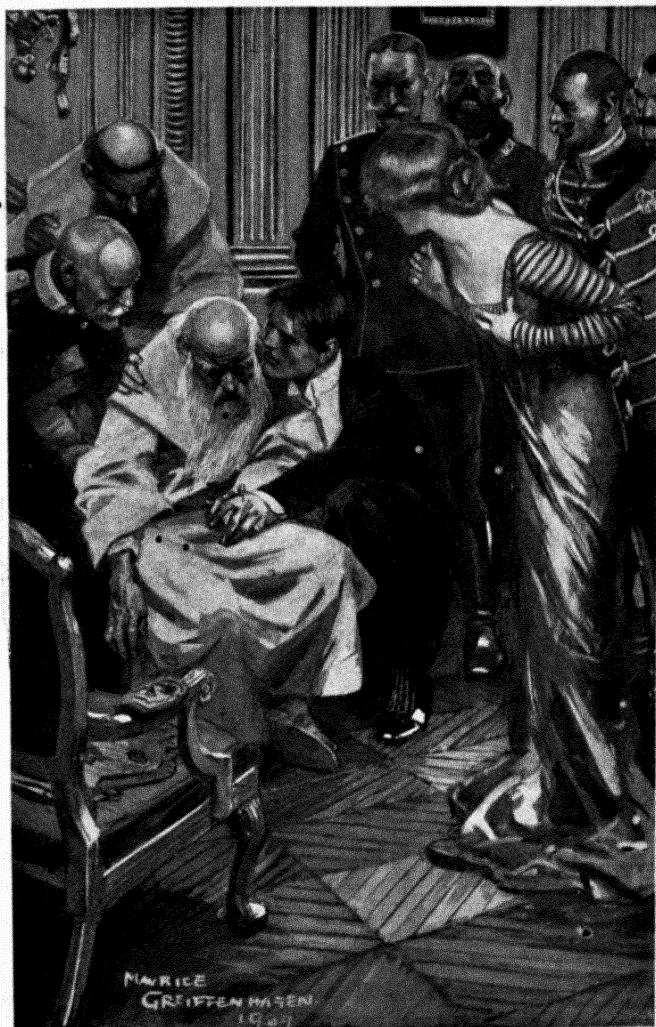
The monk ceased to speak. All had drawn near to catch his words, the soft candle light fell upon agitated faces and lips which trembled; even Rudolph of Trieste had forgotten his cynic's rôle.

"The name of the child's mother? It is necessary that we know it. Have you not taught the people that Count Philip left a son whose heritage could not be disputed? We are here to-night to question you concerning this. Is it true or false, Father?"

He remained unanswered: not a sound but that of the priest's heavy breathing broke in upon the silence—Ulusia stood very still by the chimney—the Earl bent his head and would not look at her. Jura alone continued to search the old priest's face as though some story of pity would yet be written upon it.

"My mother's name," he cried hoarsely, "tell me my mother's name?"

They waited for the monk to speak—but stretching out his hands suddenly he uttered a loud cry and fell dead into the arms of the man he had called his son.



" Fell dead into the arms of the man he had called his son."
[White Walls]

[Page 272.]